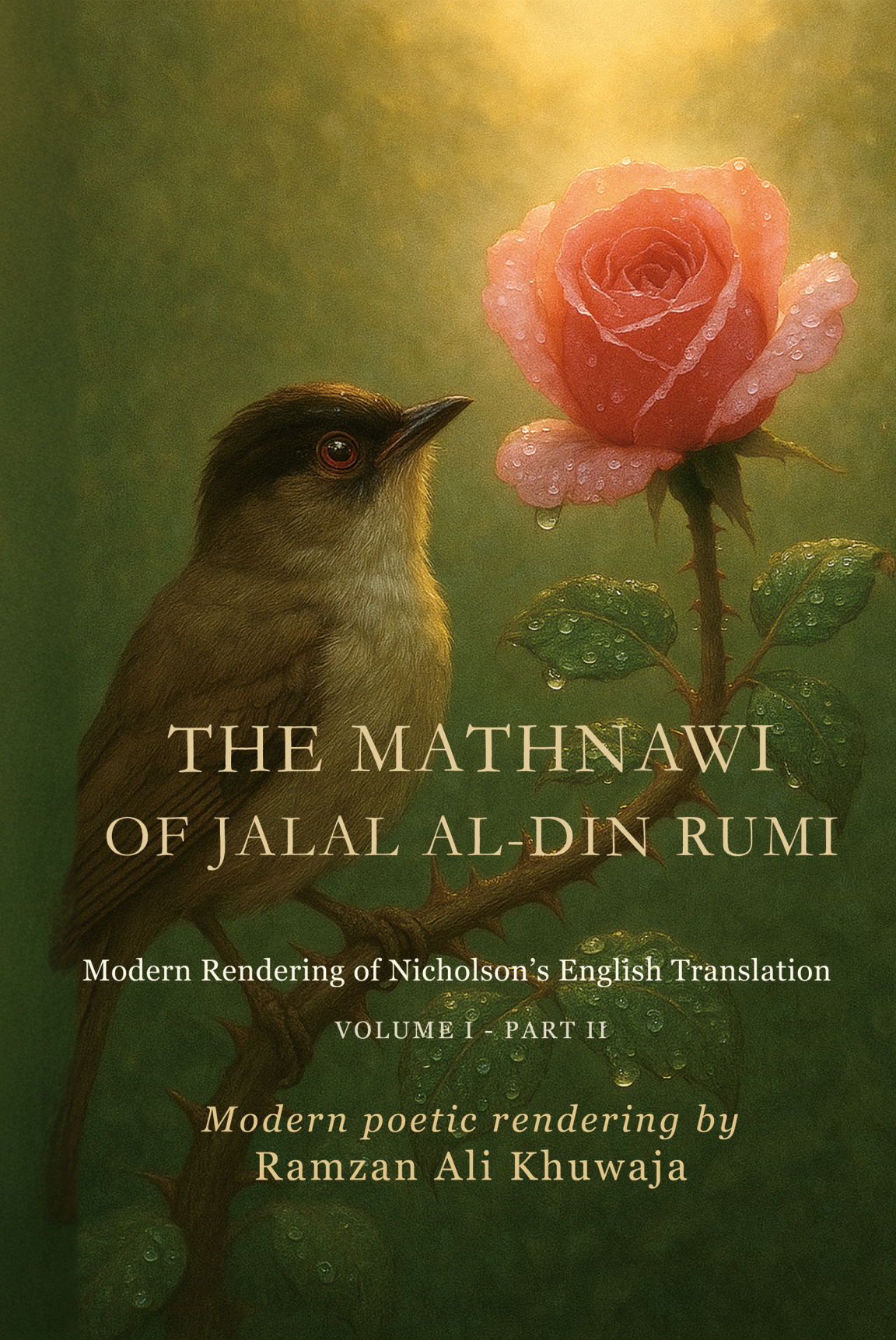

THE MATHNAWI OF JALAL AL-DIN RUMI

Modern Rendering of Nicholson's English Translation

VOLUME I - PART II

Modern poetic rendering by
Ramzan Ali Khuwaja

The Masnavi of Jalal al-Din Rumi

A Modern Poetic Rendering

Based on the English Translation by Reynold A. Nicholson

Volume I – Part II

Poetry by Mawlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi

Rendered in Modern Poetic English by Ramzan Ali Khuwaja

The Masnavi of Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi

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This volume is the second part of Volume I in a twelve-part series presenting Rumi's Masnavi in a clear and accessible form for modern readers.

All modernized verses, layout, notes, and visual components included in this edition are original to this rendering and offered freely for spiritual enrichment and public use.

For inquiries, collaborations, or additional resources, contact:

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Series Introduction

Rumi's Masnavi: A Journey Back to the Divine

More than seven hundred years ago, a Sufi-poet and mystic named Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi began dictating a vast and luminous work to his disciple Husam al-Din—verse upon verse that would become The Masnavi-ye Manavi, also known simply as The Masnavi, or "The Spiritual Couplets."

He composed it in Konya, then a flourishing center of the Seljuk empire—a city that lies today in modern-day Turkey—and wrote the entire work in Persian, the literary and spiritual language of his time.

What emerged was not merely a poem, but a spiritual cosmos: a universe of stories, symbols, parables, and piercing insights all orbiting a single, blazing truth—that we are souls separated from our Source, longing for reunion with God.

This work is presented as a twelve-part series adapted from Rumi's original Masnavi, which is traditionally arranged in six Books. Dividing the work into twelve parts makes it more accessible, reflective, and easier to absorb.

Each part invites you deeper into Rumi's vast spiritual cosmos—one story, one flame, one insight at a time.

Rumi's Masnavi is often described as a "Quran in Persian," and for good reason: it weaves divine wisdom, mystical vision, and deep love for the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessing Upon Him) into its every line. Yet it is also universal in its reach. The Masnavi speaks to the human heart beyond time and place—calling us back to what we have forgotten: our soul began with God, and its deepest longing is to return to Him.

Why This Translation? Why Now?

In recent decades, Rumi has become one of the most widely quoted poets in the world. His words appear on coffee mugs, Instagram posts, and in therapy rooms. And yet, with a few exceptions, much of what circulates in his name is far removed from his authentic voice. Often stripped of his faith, his context, and his rootedness in the vast Islamic spiritual tradition and the path of divine Love, these popular versions tend to present Rumi as vague inspiration—charming, but rootless. What remains are poetic fragments—beautiful, yes—but disconnected from the spiritual fire that gave them life.

In contrast, this rendering takes a different path.

Rumi's Masnavi is not only timeless—it is urgently relevant to the modern soul. We live in an age of distraction, anxiety, and spiritual amnesia. Many are lost in the noise of materialism, digital overstimulation, and loneliness. And yet, the ache remains. We know something is missing. The Masnavi is a guide for the one who feels that ache. It offers not just comfort, but direction.

This work aims to make Rumi accessible—to anyone seeking meaning—without severing him from the Islamic and Sufi soil in which he grew. This is not a simplified summary or a mystical paraphrase. It is a faithful re-rendering of the original Persian verses, using Reynold A. Nicholson's classic English translation as a foundation.

Nicholson's work is unmatched in accuracy, but his early 20th-century language can be complex for modern readers. His precise, literal translations have been reworked into clear, contemporary, poetic English. This language speaks to the heart and mind of today's reader, without diluting the sacred depth of the original.

In doing so, the intention is to bring forward the universality within the particular—to show how the teachings of this 13th-century Muslim mystic still speak directly to us now: calling us to remember God, to purify the heart, to love fully, and to return home to the Source we have forgotten.

A Path Through These Pages

A Guide to the Structure and Spirit of This Rendering

The Masnavi is not a work to be rushed. It is not a novel with a linear plot, nor a theological manual with tidy categories. It is a spiritual companion—woven with stories, parables, reflections, and ecstatic insight. To truly receive it, you must read it slowly, inwardly, and with a listening heart.

About the Masnavi

The full Masnavi-ye Manavi, as translated into English by Reynold A. Nicholson, contains thousands of verses across six books. Each book is rich and expansive in its own right.

In this series, Rumi's six original Books are presented in twelve accessible parts. Each part offers a focused, self-contained passage through Rumi's larger spiritual journey while remaining connected to the whole.

Each part is designed not merely as an excerpt, but as a complete spiritual encounter within the larger unfolding of the Masnavi.

How the Masnavi Flows

The Masnavi is not arranged in a simple, step-by-step structure. Instead, it unfolds like the spiritual path itself: sometimes through story, sometimes through sudden insight, sometimes through dialogue, sometimes through parable within parable. You will find:

- Stories of kings and beggars, saints and fools
- Spiritual reflections on love, trust, suffering, and divine purpose
- Dialogues and discourses—between Rumi and his listener, or between lovers, seekers, prophets, or animals
- And often, these forms are interwoven: a story may pause for a lesson; a parable may open into a prayer.

This layered and dynamic structure is part of the Masnavi's spiritual genius—but it can also be overwhelming for modern readers.

Our Approach: Book Sections

To help readers travel this path with clarity and depth, Nicholson's continuous translation has been arranged into Book Sections—discrete, carefully crafted sections that function like mini-chapters. Each section is built around a central theme, story, or spiritual reflection.

These Book Sections allow you to read the Masnavi in digestible, reflective portions, without losing the thread of Rumi's larger vision.

- Sometimes a single story spans multiple Book Sections.
- Sometimes one section contains several short, related reflections.
- Each section begins and ends at a natural pause or turning point in the original.

This structure is designed to make the Masnavi more accessible to modern minds, modern attention spans, and modern souls.

What You'll Find in Each Book Section

Every Book Section is carefully designed to guide you through The Masnavi in a way that is both accessible and spiritually grounded. Each section includes:

- A clear and meaningful title that reflects the central spiritual theme
- The verse range from Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation, helping you locate the corresponding passages and orient yourself in the larger journey of The Masnavi
- A luminous summary, written in plain and reflective language, to prepare your heart for what lies ahead
- An illustration or visual reflection to engage your imagination and bring the poetic moment to life
- A modern poetic rendering of the verses—arranged in short lines to support reflection, rhythm, and spiritual depth
- Subheadings are interwoven every dozen lines or so—like signposts along the spiritual path—to help you slow down, mark transitions, and read more reflectively

This format honours Nicholson's faithful scholarship while offering a new emotional and spiritual resonance for today's reader. It invites you to pause, to breathe, and to receive the wisdom of Rumi with openness and presence.

How to Read the Verses on the Page

The poetic verses in each Book Section flow across two columns—first the left column, then the right. Read each column down before moving to the next, like a path unfolding in two parallel steps. This layout is designed to support slow, reflective reading, offering a balance of rhythm and white space.

Further Reading and Resources

To support your journey beyond these pages, the final section of each part offers a curated set of resources, both timeless and modern. Whether you seek a more profound understanding of Rumi's teachings, wish to explore other translations of the Masnavi, or want to browse online gateways dedicated to his work, you'll find guidance there. These recommendations are not academic requirements, but invitations—for the heart that wants to travel further.

Acknowledgements

This series finds its deepest inspiration in the monumental English translation of The Masnavi by Reynold A. Nicholson. His tireless scholarship, linguistic precision, and profound sensitivity to Rumi's spiritual world have served as a foundational compass for this new rendering. Without Nicholson's pioneering work, this series would not have been possible.

This series also reflects the remarkable support made possible by advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Tools such as large language models (including deep research and reasoning models) and image generators were employed to assist with textual interpretation, verse-structure composition, rendering validation, glossary development, visual illustration, and various stages of series editing, cover design, and publishing. These AI tools served as *assistive collaborators*—enhancing the creative and analytical process while remaining fully under human guidance.

Heartfelt thanks are due to my wife, Farah Naz Khuwaja, and to my children, Maleeha Khuwaja and Rumi Ali Khuwaja, for their unwavering love, encouragement, and patience throughout this journey. Their presence, sacrifices,

and steadfast support have been the quiet strength behind this work. With deepest gratitude and love,

Ramzan Ali Khuwaja

About This Volume

This part continues the journey through Book I of Rumi's Masnavi, carrying the reader deeper into its first great movement of stories, parables, and spiritual reflections. For reference, this part corresponds to verses 2,072–3,973 of Book I in Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation.

The spiritual arc of these verses moves through Rumi's most tender and searching teachings on poverty, surrender, and the hidden mercy of God. We begin in the realm of "brokenness": an old harpist whose worldly music has faded, a poor Bedouin carrying a small pitcher of rainwater, and seekers who mistake the outer shell of religion for its living kernel. Rumi reveals that these fragile scenes are actually thresholds. What the world sees as poor, failed, or insignificant becomes a majestic offering when brought with sincerity to the Divine Court. As the parables unfold, we see the little pitcher find the river and the broken song find the Source of all music, teaching us that our very "need" is the mirror in which God's generosity is reflected.

Rumi's primary task here is to turn the seeker away from surface judgment and toward "inner seeing." Through the lens of prophets and saints—from the patience of Noah to the beauty of Joseph—he illustrates that the path is not one of self-display, but of self-effacement. He contrasts the "cleverness" of the world with the "certainty" of the heart. Whether through the story of the grammarian facing a storm or the Greek painters who win a contest by simply polishing a wall, the message remains consistent: the soul does not need more "color" or information; it needs to become a clear mirror. By loosening the grip of the lower self, the seeker moves from the restless "I" to the threshold where only the Beloved remains.

The journey culminates in the luminous example of Ali (Alayhis Salam), the "Lion of God," who famously lowers his sword when his enemy spits on him. In this moment, Rumi reveals the secret of true spiritual chivalry: action purified of

personal anger becomes Divine mercy. Here, this movement of Book I reaches one of its great peaks, showing that the fire of the ego can be cooled through trust, and the wounds of the world can be transformed into openings for Grace. This part leads the seeker from the exhaustion of self-reliance toward the vastness of surrender, reminding us that God's mercy is a hidden treasure buried beneath the ruins of our own expectations.

An Invitation

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Rumi is not
a voice from the past—

He is a friend
at your side.

These pages are not to conquer,
but to enter—*slowly*.

Walk with him,
step by step.

Let the words
slowly water your soul,
and draw you back
to the garden
you never left—
only forgot.

The Journey Begins ...

Book Sections

The Harp's Final Note

(Verses 2072–2103)

Summary

This passage continues the story of an old harpist whose fame once lifted souls into wonder, but whose body and talent finally decayed with age. As his music grows worthless in people's eyes, Rumi turns the reader toward what does

not spoil: the living "voice" of God's saints, whose inner breath carries Resurrection-power because they have become "nothing" in God—selfless, emptied, and therefore filled with Divine life.

The harper, unable to earn even bread, speaks to God with humble honesty and goes to the graveyard of Medina, playing his harp as an offering. He falls asleep against a tomb, and his soul escapes the cage of the body into a vast, pure realm. There, it describes a freedom beyond physical limits, a healing like Job's fountain. The moral is clear and tender: when the thorn of worldly attachment is pulled out, the soul is invited to leave greed behind and step into God's spacious mercy.

Poem Verses

A Fading Music

That minstrel,
who once filled the world with
rapture,
whose voice made strange visions
rise
in everyone who listened,
at whose song
the soul would spread its wings,
and the spirit's mind would spin,
dazed with longing.

But time moved on,
and he grew old.
Weakness came,
and the falcon of his soul
was reduced to catching gnats.

The Body Breaks

His back bent,
like a wine-jar bowed by age.
His brows fell heavy,
like a strap drawn over his eyes.

That sweet, life-giving voice,
so charming before,
turned rough,
worth nothing to anyone.

The tone once envied
even by Zuhra, Venus of the sky,
became like
the bray of an old donkey.

Yes, tell me,
what beauty does not sour?

What roof does not one day
become a carpet underfoot?

Only The Saints Remain

Except the voices
of God's holy friends,
hidden in their breasts.

From the echo of their breath
the Trumpet of Resurrection is
blown.

Their hearts intoxicate hearts.
Their "nothingness,"
their self-vanishing in God,
gives life
to our little existences.

The saint is amber to every
thought,
a magnet to every voice.
He is the inward sweetness
of revelation, inspiration,
and the Divine secret.

A Hungry Prayer

When the minstrel became feeble,
and could no longer earn,
he fell into debt
for even a single loaf.

He said,
"You gave me long life and delay,
O God.
You poured favors
on a ruined man.

For seventy years I sinned,
and not one day
did You withhold Your provision.

I can earn nothing now.
Today, I am Your guest.
I will play the harp for You.
I am Yours."

Medina's Graveyard

He lifted his harp
and went searching for God
in the graveyard of Medina,
crying, "Alas!"

He said,
"I ask God
for the price of silk for my strings.
In His kindness,
He accepts even mixed, impure
coin."

He played a long time.
Then he wept,
laid his head down,
made the harp his pillow,
and collapsed beside a tomb.

Sleep came over him.
And the bird of his soul
slipped out of captivity,
leaving harp and harper behind,
and darted away.

The Soul's Wide Country

Freed from the body,
freed from this world's ache,
it entered the simple world,
the vast homeland of the spirit.

There his soul sang of what it found:
"If only they would let me stay here.

How happy I would be
in this garden,
in this springtide,
drunk on this open plain,
this field of hidden anemones.

With no head or foot
I would travel.
With no lip or tooth
I would taste sugar.

With memory and thought
washed clean of brain-sickness,
I would play
with the people of Heaven.

With eyes closed
I would see whole worlds.
Without a hand
I would gather roses and basil."

Job's Fountain

That water-bird, his soul,
was plunged into a sea of honey,
into the Fountain of Job,
to drink,
to wash,
to be healed.

As Job was purified
from sole to crown,
made clean and bright
like sunrise.

If the Mathnawī were as vast as the sky,
not even half of this mystery
could fit inside it.

For the broad earth and sky of this world—
compared to that spiritual expanse—
felt so narrow
they tore my heart to pieces.

And this world,
shown to me in the minstrel's
dream,
spread my wings wide
with its spaciousness.

If this world—
and the road into it—
were truly revealed,
no one would remain
in the material world
for even a moment.

A Final Command

Then the Divine command
came to the minstrel:
"No, do not be greedy.
Since the thorn is out of your foot,
leave. Depart."

Yet his soul still lingered
in the wide estate
of God's mercy and generosity.

When Stone Learns To Listen

(Verses 2104–2160)

Summary

This passage moves through a chain of awakenings, beginning with Umar's (RA) divinely sent sleep and a dream-voice that is presented as the original source of all sound. Rumi says that every created thing silently answers God's question— "Am I not your Lord?"—simply by coming into existence. To show that even "inanimate" beings can know and respond, he tells of the Prophet's (Peace Be Upon Him - PBUH) pillar that cried out when separated from him, then chose the everlasting life of the next world over any worldly honour.

From there, the poem turns into a warning: reliance on mere argument can become a "wooden leg," easily broken by doubt, unless it is guided by the living sight of the saints—the Qutb and the people of inner vision. Finally, the theme

of non-human testimony returns in the miracle of pebbles that praise Allah and affirm Muhammad's (PBUH) message, exposing how denial can persist even in the face of clear signs.

Verses of the Poem

A Voice In The Night

A heaviness of sleep
came down on Umar,
so strongly
he could not resist it.

He looked around in wonder,
and said,
"This is not ordinary.
Something from the Unseen has
arrived,
and it never comes without a
purpose."

He laid his head down,
and sleep carried him away.

In his dream,
a voice came from God,
and his spirit heard it,
the source of every cry and sound.

That is the true Voice.
All other voices
are only echoes.

Turcoman and Kurd,
Persian and Arab,
all have understood that Voice
without ear,
without lip.

And what am I saying,
Turcoman and Persian and
Ethiopian?
Even wood and stone
have understood it.

The Hidden "Yes"

At every moment,
from Him comes the call,
"Am I not your Lord?"

And in that very instant,
substance and accident,
essence and passing form,
rise from nonexistence into being.

If no spoken "Yes" comes,
still their coming into existence

is their "Yes."

Listen, then,
to a story that opens the meaning,
of how even stone and wood
carry a kind of awareness.

The Pillar That Wept

When the crowd grew large,
they made a pulpit for the Prophet,
peace be upon him,
so the people could see him better
as he spoke.

But the pillar he used to lean on
began to moan,
crying from separation,
like a thinking soul
torn from what it loves.

The Prophet said,
"O pillar, what do you want?"

It answered,
"My soul has turned to blood
from being parted from you.

I was your support,
and now you have left me,
choosing another place to lean."

The Prophet said,
"Do you want to become a date-palm,
so people in East and West
will gather fruit from you?

Or do you want God
to make you a cypress in the next world,
always fresh,
always flourishing?"

The pillar replied,
"I want what lasts forever."

Wake up,
you who drift in heedlessness.
Do not be less than a piece of wood.

The Prophet buried that pillar in the earth,
so it may be raised again,
like humankind,
on the Day of Resurrection.

Those Called By God

So you may know,
whoever God truly calls to Himself,
is loosened
from the work of this world.

Whoever receives his task from
God,
enters that Presence,
and steps out of worldly busyness.

But one with no share
in the gifts of spiritual unveiling,
how will he believe
that inanimate things can
complain?

He says "Yes" with his tongue,
not with his heart,
only so people won't label him
hypocrite.

If there were no knowers
of God's command "Be,"
this teaching would be rejected,
and the world would laugh it away.

The Wooden Leg Of Proof

How many conformists,
how many legalists,
fall into the abyss
from one small stain of doubt,

because their whole flight
depends on opinion,
and on arguments stitched together
by the mind.

The Devil drops a question,
and the blind tumble headfirst.

The leg of the syllogizer
is wooden.
A wooden leg
is not steady.

Not like the Qutb of the age,
the pole-saint with inner sight,
whose steadiness
makes mountains dizzy.

The blind man uses a staff,
so he won't smash his face
on the stones.

And who is the real victor
for the army of religion?
The one with vision.

Even if the blind walk by a staff,
they only "see" safely
under the protection
of those who truly see.

If there were no people of vision,
no spiritual kings,
the blind of the world
would not survive.

From blindness comes no sowing,

no harvest,
no cultivation,
no trade,
no profit.

Break The Staff Of Quarrel

If God did not pour mercy on you,
the wood of your deductions
would snap.

What is this staff?
Inference,
proof,
argument.

Who placed it in your hand?
The All-Seeing,
the Almighty.

But if the staff becomes a weapon,
used for fighting and striking,
then break it,
O blind one.

He gave you a staff
so you could approach Him,
and you raised it against Him
in anger.

O company of the blind,
what are you doing?

Bring the seer
between you and God.

Hold the skirt of the One
who gave you the staff,
and remember what Adam
suffered
from disobedience.

Remember Moses and Ahmad,
peace be upon them,
how the staff became a serpent,
and how a pillar
was given understanding.

From a staff, a serpent.
From a pillar, a moaning cry.
They beat the drum of honor
for the Religion,
five times daily.

If this taste of truth
were only intellectual,
why would miracles be needed at
all?

What the mind can fully grasp,
it swallows without dispute,
without signs.

This untouched Way
is not captured by the mind,

yet it is accepted
in the hearts of the fortunate.

Hidden Skeptics

Just as devils and wild beasts,
out of fear of Adam,
fled to islands,

so skeptics,
afraid of prophetic miracles,
slip under the grass,

so they can live in hypocrisy,
wearing the reputation of Islam,
and you won't recognize them.

Like counterfeiters,
they coat a base coin with silver,
and stamp on it
the King's name.

The outer form of their words
speaks tawhid,
the oneness of God,
and the religion of Islam.

But inside,
it is like weed-seed
mixed into bread.

The philosopher has no stomach
to speak openly,
for if he speaks,
the true Religion will confound
him.

His hands and feet are "inanimate,"
yet they obey his spirit's
commands.

Even when their tongues
raise doubts,
their hands and feet
testify against them.

Pebbles That Spoke

Abu Jahl held pebbles in his fist,
and said,
"O Ahmad,
tell me quickly what this is.

If you are the Messenger of God,
what is hidden in my hand?
Speak,
since you claim knowledge
of Heaven's mysteries."

The Prophet said,
"How do you want it?
Should I tell you what they are,
or should they themselves testify
that I am truthful?"

Abu Jahl said,

"The second is more astonishing."

The Prophet said,
"Yes,
and God's power is greater still."

At once,
from the center of that closed fist,
each pebble began to proclaim
faith.

Each said,
"There is no god,"
and each said,
"except Allah."

Each one strung the pearl,
"Ahmad is the Messenger of
Allah."

When Abu Jahl heard it,
anger flared in him,
and he hurled the pebbles
down to the ground.

An Unseen Call

(Verses 2161–2216)

Summary

This passage returns to the story of a desperate old minstrel who waits in poverty until God's voice commands Umar (RA) to find him and bring him help from the public treasury. Umar (RA) searches the graveyard expecting a saintly figure, but finds only an old harper, and slowly realizes that "illumined hearts" can be hidden in outward darkness. When Umar (RA) delivers God's greeting and gold, the old man is overcome with shame, smashes his harp, and confesses that his music had become a veil, a "robber" that kept him from the King's highway.

Umar (RA) then guides him from the stage of self-aware weeping into fana—the dissolving of "I-hood" in God—warning that even repentance can

become another form of self. The minstrel's lower self falls away, and he is "drowned" in the Divine Ocean, beyond speech, beyond feeling, until his story disappears behind the veil.

Verses of the Poem

Gold In The Graveyard Air

Turn back, and listen again,
to the minstrel's sorrow,
because waiting has worn him
down,
until hope itself feels thin.

A voice came to Umar,
may God be pleased with him,
saying, O Umar,
rescue Our servant from need.

We have a servant,
beloved, honoured, chosen,
go on foot to the graveyard,
take the trouble of love.

Rise quickly,
place seven hundred dinars
from the public treasury
into your hand.

Carry it to him, and say,
"O you who are Our choice,
accept this small gift for now,
and forgive Us its littleness.

Spend it on silk,
and when it is gone,
come back here again."

And Umar, trembling with awe,
sprang up at the sound,
tightened his belt for service,
and hurried toward the graves.

Seeking The Beloved

He ran with the purse under his
arm,
circling the cemetery,
searching for God's favourite,
as if love itself were chasing.

He ran long,
and saw no one
except a poor old man,
alone among the stones.

"This is not he," he said,
and ran again,

until he was tired,
and still saw only the old harper.

He said,
"God said, 'We have a servant,
pure, worthy, blessed.'
How could an old musician be
that?"

O Hidden Mystery,
how excellent You are,
how excellent.

Again he wandered,
like a hunting lion
roaming the desert,
but finding no track.

When it became certain
there was no one else,
he whispered,
"Many an illumined heart lives in
darkness."

So he returned,
and sat beside the old man,
with a hundred marks of respect.

Fear Turns To Mercy

Umar happened to sneeze,
and the old man leapt up.

He saw Umar,
froze in astonishment,
then began to tremble,
ready to flee.

Inside himself he cried,
"O God, help me,
the Inspector has fallen
upon a poor old harper."

When Umar looked at his face,
he saw shame,
and the pallor of fear.

Then Umar said,
"Do not fear,
do not run from me.
I bring you good news from God.

How often God has praised your
inward state,
until He has made Umar
fall in love with your face.

Sit beside me,
do not make separation,
so I may speak into your ear
a secret from Divine favour.

God sends you peace,
and asks how you are faring
in your distress,

in these boundless sorrows.

Look, here is gold
for the price of silk.
Spend it,
and come back to this place."

Shame Becomes Fire

The old man heard,
and trembled through his bones,
biting his hand,
tearing his garment.

He cried,
"O God, who has no likeness,"
because shame melted him
like wax near flame.

He wept long,
until grief overflowed all measures,
then he dashed his harp to the ground,
and broke it into pieces.

He said,
"O harp, you were a curtain
between me and God.
You were a highway robber,
cutting me off from the King's road.

For seventy years
you drank my blood,
and because of you
my face is black before Divine perfection.

Have mercy, O generous God,
O Keeper of faith,
on a life spent in wrongdoing."

God gave me a life,
and only He knows
the worth of each day.

I spent it, breath by breath,
blowing it away
into high notes and low notes.

Alas, while I guarded
the mode and rhythm of 'Iraq,
the bitter moment of departure
slipped from my mind.

Alas, from the sweet freshness
of those subtle melodies,
the seed in my heart dried up,
and the heart itself died.

Alas, while I was busy
with these twenty-four tunes,
the caravan passed,
and the day grew late.

The Deeper Complaint

O God, help me
against this self of mine
that cries for help.

From no one do I seek justice,
except from this justice-seeking
"me,"
this self that pretends to plead
while it also accuses.

No one can give me my right,
except the One
who is nearer to me
than I am.

Because this "I"
comes to me from Him,
moment by moment,
a borrowed claim.

So when this "I" collapses,
I see only Him.

As when someone counts out gold
for you,
your gaze stays on the giver's hand,
not on your own emptiness.

Beyond The Tears

Then Umar said,
"This wailing of yours
is still a sign of sobriety,
of self-awareness.

The way of one
who has passed beyond self
is another way,
because sobriety, too, is a sin.

Sobriety rises from remembering
the past,
and past and future
are veils between you and God.

Throw fire on both,
how long will you be full of knots
like a reed?

While the reed is knotted,
it cannot share secrets,
it cannot be companion
to lip and breath.

So long as you are 'going about,'
you are wrapped in your going.
And when you come 'home,'
you are still with yourself.

O you whose knowledge
does not know the Giver of
knowledge,
your repentance is worse than your
sin.

You repent of what is past,
but tell me,
when will you repent
of this repentance?

One moment you lean
toward the thin sound of the
treble,
another moment you kiss
weeping and wailing."

When Faruq, Umar,
became a mirror for mysteries,
the old man's heart
woke up from within.

He became
without tears, without laughter,
like the soul at rest.

His animal soul fell away,
and another soul
came to life.

Drowning In Majesty

In that hour
a bewilderment rose in him,
so vast he went beyond
earth and heaven.

A seeking beyond seeking,
a search beyond search,
I do not know how to say it,
if you know, tell.

Words beyond words,
feelings beyond feelings,
he drowned in the beauty
of the Lord of Majesty.

Drowned,
not with any hope of escape,
not with any name left,
known only to the Divine Ocean.

Partial reason
cannot speak the mysteries
of Universal Reason,
unless demand after demand
arrives,
Divine impulses,
calling the hidden into view.

When demand after demand
comes,
the waves of that Sea
reach even this shore.

And now that the old man's
experience
has reached this place,
the old man and what happened to
him
withdraw behind the veil.

When The Sun Spends Itself

(Verses 2217–2243)

Summary

A new door opens here as an elder—Rumi's guiding voice—steps away from empty debate, reminding us that the sweetest spiritual joy asks for a daring wager, the surrender of the self. He points to the sun as a sign of this truth, forever emptying itself to give life, then filling again. And he calls on the "Sun of Reality," God, to renew this worn-out world, pouring spirit from the Unseen into human existence.

Then Rumi clarifies a well-known prophetic teaching: two angels proclaim each day, blessing the true "spender" and warning the miser. Yet this "spending" is not reckless charity or sensual waste. It is giving in God's way, with God's permission, guided by those near to Him. The lover's real generosity is the

offering of the soul. Hoarding ends in decay, but surrender becomes harvest—cutting down the bitter animal self so the sweet river of the heavenly soul can flow.

Verses of the Poem

Half-Told Wisdom

The elder has shaken his cloak,
free of talk and argument.
Half the story still rests,
unfinished on our tongues.

For the sake of that delight,
that clean inward joy,
it is right to wager
hundreds of thousands of lives.

Chase the spiritual forest,
like a falcon on the wind.
Be a soul-gambler,
like the sun of this world.

The Sun's Emptying

The high sun scatters life,
and every moment,
it empties itself,
then fills again.

O Sun of Reality,
spread spiritual life,
bring the new
into this tired old world.

Soul and spirit stream
from the Unseen (al-ghayb),
into human being,
like running water.

The Angels' Cry

The Prophet said,
two angels keep calling,
as a warning in every marketplace:

"O God,
give the spenders contentment,
repay a hundred-thousandfold
for each dirham they spend."

"And O God,
give the tight-fisted
nothing here
but loss upon loss."

But know this,
many a restraint is better
than careless giving.

Do not hand out what is God's,
except by God's command.

So you may receive
an endless treasure in return,
and not be counted
with the unbelievers
who slaughtered camels
so their swords might defeat
Mustafa—
the Chosen One, Muhammad.

Seek God's command
from one united with God,
for not every heart
can read that command.

A Costly Mistake

Like the slave
who thought he was being fair,
and gave the King's property
to rebels against the King.

The Quran warns the heedless,
their spending becomes
a bitter grief to them.

What does such "justice" earn
in the King's sight?
Exile,
and a blackened face of disgrace.

The chiefs of Mecca
offered sacrifices in war,
hoping to purchase favour.
So the true believer prays in fear,
"Guide us on the straight path."

The Lover's Gift

It suits the generous
to give money.
But the lover's generosity
is to give the soul.

If you give bread for God,
bread returns to you.
If you give your life for God,
life returns to you.

When the plane-tree drops its
leaves,
the Creator gives it
the provision of leaflessness—
spiritual poverty (faqr),
a new kind of abundance.

If your hand is emptied by giving,
how could God's bounty
leave you trampled?

When someone sows,
the barn becomes empty,
yet the field grows beautiful.

But if he hoards seed in the barn,
weevils, mice,
and the slow calamities of time
eat it away.

Cut The Bitter Soul

This world is a negation,
so look for affirmation in God—
the One (tawhid).

Your outer form is hollow,
so seek the Real
in your essence.

Bring the briny, bitter animal soul
to the sword,
and buy the soul
that is a great sweet river.

And if you cannot
stand at that lofty threshold,
then at least,
listen to this story from me.

A Door Of Open Hands

(Verses 2244–2286)

Summary

This section begins in a hush, and then widens into a story about two kinds of "giving." First, Rumi points to a Caliph whose generosity seems to reach the edges of the world—so abundant that the poor and the needy naturally turn toward his door as if it were a sacred direction. Then the scene shifts into a desert tent, where a Bedouin wife pours out her bitterness at their hunger and humiliation, and her husband answers with weary honesty about how poverty can make even hospitality impossible.

From there, the teaching opens into a warning for spiritual seekers: some people, starving for guidance, become "guests" of impostors who borrow Sufi language—like claiming the rank of the Abdal—yet carry no fragrance of God.

Still, Rumi allows one rare exception: a sincere disciple's pure intention can sometimes bring real spiritual gain even through a mistaken teacher, like a prayer offered in darkness that is accepted by Allah.

Verses of the Poem

The Caliph's Ocean

In earlier times, there lived a
Caliph,
whose giving outshone Hatim of
Ṭayy,
as if generosity itself
had taken a human form.

He lifted high the banner of open-
handedness,
and want grew thin in the world.
A sea of pearls,
pure gift upon gift.

His reach ran from Qaf to Qaf,
from the farthest rim of
imagination
to the farthest rim again.
In this dusty world,
he was cloud and rain.

In him,
the Giver of all gifts
let His mercy appear,
as a center-point,
a living sign.

His gifts made sea and mine
tremble with shame,
caravan after caravan
hurried toward his door.
Need itself turned to his threshold,
as if that gate
were the qibla of hunger.

Persians and Greeks,
Turkmans and Arabs,
stood stunned before his largesse.
He was Water of Life,
an ocean of bounty,
reviving Arab and stranger alike.

A Tent Of Hardship

One night a desert woman spoke to
her husband,
and her words spilled past restraint.

"We are crushed by poverty," she
said,
"while the whole world sits in ease,

and we sit in grief.

We have no bread,
our only seasoning is ache and
envy.
We have no jug,
our only water is tears
streaming from our eyes.

By day,
our clothing is burning sunlight.
By night,
our bedding and blanket
are moonbeams.

We look at the round moon,
and imagine a round loaf,
then raise our hands to the sky,
begging the air.

Even the poor feel shame
when they see our state.
Our fear for daily food
turns daylight into night.

Family and strangers flee from us,
as people fled from Samiri,
the man whose touch brought trial.
And if I ask for a handful of lentils,
they snap,
'Be quiet,
you death, you plague!'

Among Arabs,
they boast of battle and of giving,
and you, among Arabs,
are like a blot in fine writing."

He answered,
"What battle can we fight?
We are slain without a sword,
dizzy from the blade of need.

What gift can we offer?
We live in begging,
like someone bleeding a gnat in
midair,
thinking it a sacrifice.

And if a guest arrives,
then—if I am truly alive—
I will creep in the night
to steal his ragged cloak
when he falls asleep."

False Lamps, Real Hunger

For this reason, the wise have said,
"Become the guest
of those who truly benefit."

But you may become
disciple and guest
to someone who, out of baseness,
robs you of everything you have.

He has no strength,
how can he make you strong?
He gives no light,
he darkens you.

If he has no light inside himself,
how can anyone
gain light by sitting near him?
He is like a half-blind healer of
eyes,
what will he put in your eye
except wool?

Such is our state,
in poverty and affliction.
May no guest be fooled by us.

If you have never seen
a famine of ten years
walking on two feet,
open your eyes,
look at us.

The Impostor's Mask

Our outer face resembles
the inner truth of the pretender,
darkness in the heart,
a tongue polished and showy.

No scent of God on him,
yet his claim is bigger
than Seth
and Father Adam.

The Devil is ashamed of him,
and would not even show him his
own portrait,
yet he says,
"We are of the Abdal,
and more than them."

He steals the phrases of dervishes,
so people will call him holy.
He nitpicks Bayazid—
even Yazid would blush
to share the same air with him.

He has no share
of Heaven's bread and feast,
God has not thrown him
even a single bone.

Yet he proclaims,
"The dishes are laid out.
I am God's deputy.
I am the son of the spiritual
Caliph.
Come, hungry simple ones,
eat your fill at my table"—
and the table is nothing.

Some, trusting the promise of
"Tomorrow,"

circle his door for years,
and Tomorrow never arrives.

It takes a long time
for a man's hidden conscience
to show its true face,
in great matters and small,
to see whether beneath his wall
is treasure,
or a nest of snakes and ants and
dragons.

And when it becomes clear
he is nothing,
the seeker's life may already be
spent.
What good is that knowledge then?

Rare Mercy In Mistake

Yet, rarely,
a disciple may come
whose inward light
turns even falsehood
into a strange medicine.

By the purity of his aim,
he reaches a high degree,
though he thought the impostor
was soul,
and found only body.

Like one searching for qibla
in the deep of night,
he may not find it clearly,
yet the prayer is still accepted.

That pretender is empty of soul
within,
but we are empty of bread without.

Why should we hide our poverty
like the impostor hides his
emptiness,
and burn with shame
for a reputation made of air?

When Contentment Walks Beside You

(Verses 2287–2314)

Summary

A new door opens here... and we hear a Bedouin husband speaking to his wife, gently but firmly, asking her to stop chasing constant "more." He reminds her that life is already flowing away, and that gain and loss both pass like floodwater.

He points to God's creation as proof: from dove to nightingale to falcon, every creature is sustained by Allah without frantic worry. Then he turns inward, saying our deepest grief comes from the dusty smoke of ego and restless desire. Pain, he teaches, is a "piece of Death," a messenger that can become sweet if we meet it with patience and trust.

As dawn arrives, he warns that the hunger for gold makes the soul forget its own original worth. Contentment is the true matching pair, like two shoes meant to walk together.

Verses of the Poem

A Husband's Counsel

My husband said,
How long will you chase earnings,
and fields, and seed?

What's left of our life, really.
Most of it has already gone.

A clear-minded person
doesn't cling to gain,
or panic at loss.

Both pass,
like a flash-flood rushing through.

Do Not Cling To Passing Water

Whether life runs clear,
or comes down muddy,
don't keep arguing with it.

It doesn't stay,
not even for a breath.

Look at this world.
Thousands of creatures live at ease,
without your up-and-down
anxiety.

The dove on the branch
keeps thanking God,
though tonight's food isn't
gathered yet.

The nightingale sings praise,
saying,
I trust You for my daily bread,
O Answerer of prayer.

The falcon has made
the king's hand its home,
and let go of all hunger
for carrion.

From gnat to elephant,
take any creature you like,
they live as God's household,
fed by Him.

And what a Nourisher He is.

The Root Of Grief

All the griefs packed in our chests
rise from the steam and dust
of our "me,"
and from the wind of vain
wanting.

These uprooting sorrows
are a scythe to us.

To keep labelling everything—
this is "such,"
that is "such,"
is a trap laid for the heart.

Know this.
Every pain is a piece of Death.

If you can,
push that piece of Death out of
you.

And if you cannot run
from even a part of Death,
know this too,
the whole of it will one day
pour over your head.

If that part of Death
turns sweet to you,
then know,
God will make the whole sweet.

Pains arrive
as Death's messengers.

Don't turn your face away
from the messenger,
foolish one.

Whoever insists on living "sweetly"
here,
often dies bitterly.

Whoever serves only the body,
does not rescue the soul.

Sheep are driven
from open pasture into the town.
The fatter they are,
the quicker they are slaughtered.

Dawn Is Already Here

Night has passed,
dawn has come.

My soul,
how long will you begin again
the story of gold?

You were young once,
and you were more content.

Now you hunt for gold,

but at the beginning
you were gold,
already precious, already whole.

You were a fruiting vine,
how did you become unsellable?
How did you rot
while your fruit was ripening?

Your fruit should grow sweeter,
not move backward,
like rope-makers who keep twisting
and never arrive.

You are my wife.
A wife must share her husband's
quality
for the house to stand straight.

A pair must match,
look at shoes,
or boots.

If one shoe pinches the foot,
what good is the pair?

Have you ever seen
one leaf of a folding door small,
and the other large?

Or a wolf
paired with the lion of the wild?

A camel's two sacks
won't ride level
when one is half-empty
and the other full.

I walk, steady-hearted,
toward contentment.

Why do you turn instead
toward bitterness and blame?

So the contented man,
moved by sincerity and ardour,
kept speaking to his wife
until daybreak.

The Ego Unveiled

(Verses 2315–2340)

Summary

This section begins in a hush... and then breaks open into a fierce, cleansing speech. A wife confronts her young husband, who hides his emptiness behind status, polished talk, and religious-sounding claims. She refuses to be fooled by "reputation as religion," and calls him back to honesty, to shame, to real self-seeing.

She exposes the gap between the name of contentment and its living truth, reminding him of the Prophet's (PBUH) saying that contentment is a treasure. Then the imagery sharpens: his so-called "understanding" becomes a snake and scorpion—cleverness that harms, not wisdom that heals.

The climax becomes a parable: he is both snake and charmer, trapped in mutual enchantment. Even the sacred Name of God—meant for remembrance—is misused as bait. And yet, the Name of God remains pure and will answer injustice with justice.

Verses of the Poem

A Hard Truth

She shouted at him,
"O you who worship your
reputation,
I'm done swallowing your spells,
your sweet talk that bends the
truth.

Don't toss out nonsense,
dressed up as certainty.
Go on,
don't speak from pride.

How long will you keep
performing,
with polished phrases and fake
thunder?
Look at what you do,
look at what you are inside,
and feel some shame.

Pride is ugly,
and in a beggar, uglier still,
like cold, wet clothes,
after a snowy day.

How long this show,
this chatter and chest-beating,
when your whole house is fragile,
like a spider's web?"

The Treasure You Don't Know

"When did you ever light your soul
with contentment?
You only learned the word,
not the reality.

The Prophet said,
'Contentment is a treasure.'
But you can't even tell
gain from pain.

Contentment is the soul's hidden
wealth,
so don't brag about it,
you who are grief and trouble to
my spirit.

Don't call me your companion.
Stop fluttering and flapping.
I'm the companion of justice,
not the companion of fraud.

How do you walk with amirs and beys,
acting grand,
when you're out there
slitting the veins of a locust in midair,
scraping for the smallest bite?"

The Wolf In Fine Clothes

"You fight dogs over a bone,
and you wail
like a hollow reed-flute,
empty-bellied and thin.

Don't stare at me with dull contempt,
or I'll speak out
what runs in your veins,
and people will see your hidden stains.

You think your understanding
stands above mine,
but have you truly seen me at all,
me you call 'lacking'?

Don't leap at me
like a reckless wolf.
Better to have no sense,
than to carry the disgrace
of a mind like yours.

If your 'understanding'
becomes a shackle on humanity,
it isn't understanding.
It's a snake,
it's a scorpion."

The Snake And The Charmer

"May God oppose your wrongdoing,
your deceit.
May the trickery of your mind
fall short of hurting us.

You are both the snake
and the snake-charmer,
strange wonder.
Both catcher and poison,
a shame upon the Arabs.

If the crow truly knew its own ugliness,
it would melt from sorrow,
like snow under grief.

The charmer sings like an enemy,
spelling the snake,
and the snake, at the same time,

spells him back.

If the trap were not a spell
laid for the snake,
how could the charmer ever
become prey
to the snake's spell?"

The Name Of God As Witness

"Greed drives the charmer,
profit and display,
so he doesn't notice
the snake's enchantment—
not until it's too late.

The snake says,
'Charmer, beware.
You've seen your spell at work on
me,
now look at mine.

You deceive me
with the Name of God,
so you can expose me
to shame and confusion.

But it was the Name of God
that bound me,
not your clever tricks.
You turned the Name of God
into a snare,
woe to you.

The Name of God will take
revenge for me.
I hand my body and soul
to the Name of God.

Either it will cut your life-vein
by my strike,
or it will throw you into prison,
as I have been thrown.'"

So she poured out words like
this—
whole volumes of sharp speech—
reciting them
to her young husband.

The Brilliance of Want

(Verses 2341–2393)

Summary

A new door opens here... the speaker answers his wife, who thinks his poverty is merely greed and shame. He insists that "poverty is my pride," not as a slogan, but as a spiritual unveiling: wealth can act like a cap that hides baldness, while the friends of God are like eyes that see best when uncovered. He explains how money can hide vice in the marketplace, while the poor, even if they speak pure truth, are ignored by those blinded by craving.

Then he turns the lesson inward. People judge from the "colored glass" of their own self, so one man sees the Prophet as ugly (Abu Jahl) and another sees him as pure sun (Abu Bakr), yet both reveal what is in themselves. The speaker urges his wife to "come down from the pear-tree," try poverty briefly, and

discover its hidden light. He ends with a boundary: if she cannot stop quarrelling, he will leave—because his heart is moving toward God, not toward endless argument.

Verses of the Poem

Pride Without Possession

"O woman," he said,
are you a woman,
or the father of sorrow itself?

Poverty is my pride,
so don't strike my head
with blame,
don't whip me with reproach.

Wealth and gold are like a cap on the head,
a shelter for the bald.
But the one with thick, beautiful curls
is happier
when the cap is gone.

The Eye Unveiled

A friend of God is like the eye,
his seeing is clearer
when nothing covers it.

When a slave-dealer wants to sell a healthy slave,
he lifts the garment away,
so the buyer can see
there are no hidden faults.

But if there is a defect,
how could he dare to undress him?
He hides the flaw with cloth,
and tricks the purchaser.

He says,
"This one is shy of good and evil,
if you strip him,
he'll run from you."

Money As A Veil

A rich merchant can be drowned in vice,
up to the ears,
yet he has money,
and money covers the stink.

Because of greed,
the greedy one cannot see his own ugliness.
Craving ties hearts together,

like a rope.

And if a beggar speaks a word
as pure as mined gold,
his goods still won't find a path
into the shop.

This matter of spiritual poverty
is beyond your grasp,
so don't look down on it.

The dervishes are beyond property
and wealth,
they have a generous share
from the Almighty.

The Justice Of God

God Most High is just,
how could the Just
treat the weak with tyranny?

How could He give fortune and
comfort to one,
and throw another into fire?

That fire burns him
because he carries an evil thought
about the Lord
who created both worlds.

Is the saying,
"Poverty is my pride,"
empty and false?

No,
it holds thousands of hidden
glories,
and thousands of quiet disdains
for worldly glitter.

Snake-Fangs And Mercy

In anger you've thrown nicknames
at me,
you called me a deceiver of friends,
a catcher of snakes.

If I catch a snake,
I pull its fangs,
so it won't be crushed and killed.

Those fangs are an enemy to its
own life,
so with skill,
I turn the enemy into a friend.

Never do I chant a spell
out of greed.

I have flipped greed upside down,
I have beaten it,
finished with it.

God forbid,

I want nothing from created
beings.

With contentment,
there is a whole world
inside my heart.

Come Down From The Tree

You sit on top of the pear-tree,
and from up there
you see everything distorted.

Come down,
so the bad thought will not keep
spinning.

When you whirl and grow dizzy,
you think the house is turning,
but it is you
who are turning.

Colored Glass, One Sun

Everyone moves from where they
stand,
and from that circle
they judge the world.

A blue glass shows the sun as blue,
a red glass shows it as red.

But when the glass escapes color,
it becomes clear,
it becomes white,
and it tells the truth more than all
the others.

That clear glass becomes the imam,
the model,
for every tinted lens.

Two Men, One Mirror

Abu Jahl saw Ahmad,
Muhammad, peace be upon him,
and said,
"What an ugly figure
from the sons of Hashim!"

Ahmad replied,
"You're right,
you've spoken truth,
even if you were rude."

Then the Siddiq, Abu Bakr, saw
him,
and said,
"O Sun,
you are neither East nor West,
shine in beauty!"

Ahmad said,
"You spoke the truth, dear friend,
you who escaped
this world of nothingness."

Those present said,
"O king,
why did you call them both
truthful
when their words opposed each
other?"

He said,
"I am a mirror
polished by the Divine hand.

Turk and Indian look into me,
and each sees
what already lives within."

Try The Poverty

O wife,
if you think I'm greedy,
rise above this anxious care
for worldly things.

This looks like greed,
but it is mercy.

Where Divine blessing is present,
where could greed remain?

Try poverty for a day or two,
so you can see
double riches
inside it.

Be patient with poverty,
leave this disgust,
because in poverty
there is the light
of the Lord of Glory.

Don't sour your face,
and you will see thousands of souls,
through contentment,
drowning in an ocean of honey.

You will see countless bitter
sufferers
steeped in rose-syrup,
like the rose itself.

Milk Needs Thirst

Ah, if only you had understanding,
so the opened story of my heart
could show itself to you
from my soul.

These words are like milk
in the soul's teat,
they don't flow well
unless someone truly drinks.

When the listener becomes thirsty,
craving the truth,
the preacher, even if half-dead,
becomes eloquent.

When the listener is fresh,
not bored, not weary,
even the mute
finds a hundred tongues.

Beauty For The Seeing

When a stranger enters my door,
the women of the harem
hide themselves in veils.

But when a harmless relative
comes,
the covered ones
lift their face-veils.

Everything beautiful, fair, and
lovely
is made
for the eye that can see.

How could melody,
treble and bass,
be made
for the ear of one who is deaf?

God did not make musk fragrant
for nothing,
He made it for the sense of smell,
not for the one
whose nostrils are blocked.

God shaped earth and sky,
He raised fire and light within
creation.

Earth is for those made of clay,
heaven for the dwellers of heaven.

The low person fights what is high,
and each buyer's destination,
Garden or Fire,
shows itself in his choices.

O chaste woman,
have you ever dressed yourself up
for someone blind?

If I filled the world
with hidden pearls of wisdom,
what would it do,
if they are not your portion?

No Taste For Quarrel

O wife,
let go of quarrelling and ambush.
And if you won't,
then let go of me.

What room do I have
for fighting the good or the bad?
Even peace-making
makes my heart recoil.

If you keep silent, it's well.

If not,
then in this very moment
I will leave my house and home.

Tears That Melt The Iron

(Verses 2394–2446)

Summary

This section begins in a hush... and then in tears. A wife, facing her husband's harshness, turns toward him with humble self-abasement, offering her whole being and swearing that her grief is not selfish, but protective love for him. Her speech is a kind of surrender—she lays down "sword and shroud," begging him to do anything except separation. Her weeping becomes a lightning-flash that ignites compassion in the lonely man's heart.

Rumi then widens the lens: desire between man and woman is not accidental but part of God's ordering of comfort between Adam and Eve, a power so strong that even heroes become captives to it, and even the Prophet's tenderness is remembered. The teaching turns toward the difference between true wisdom and

animal fierceness, and ends in repentance: destiny blinds, then lifts, and the man returns to mercy—while Rumi points beyond both faith and unbelief to the One Majesty that draws all things toward Him.

Verses of the Poem

A Door Of Softness

When she saw him
burning fierce,
hard to handle,

she began to weep.

A woman's tears,
truly,
can be a hidden snare.

She said,
"When did I ever imagine
such words from you?

From you,
I expected something else."

She came forward,
by the path of self-nothingness,
self-lowering.

"I am your dust," she said,
"not fit to be called your wife.

My body, my soul,
all I am,
belongs to you.

Authority and command,
entirely,
are yours.

If poverty has made my heart
impatient,
it is not for my own sake,
it is for yours.

You have been my remedy
in every trouble.
I cannot bear that you should be
penniless."

Oath Of Devotion

"By my soul and conscience,
this crying, this moaning,
is not for me.

It is for you.

By God,
at every moment,
my self longs to die for your self,
right before you.

If only your soul,
the one my soul adores,
knew what my inward soul is
thinking.

But since you hold
such a bad opinion of me,
I have grown weary,
in soul and in body.

I throw earth on silver and gold,
I renounce them,
since you treat me like this,
O comfort of my soul."

"Who lives in my heart,
who dwells inside my soul,
will you declare yourself free of me
for a small offense?

Declare it then,
you have the power,
but my soul rises up,
pleading against that sentence.

Remember the days
when I was like an idol of beauty,
and you were the worshipper,
lost in devotion."

Yielding Without Resistance

"Your servant has set her heart
on obeying you.

Whatever you call 'cooked,'
she calls it 'burnt.'

Whatever you do to me,
I am your spinach in the pot,
I accept your fire.

Whether you are
sour broth or sweet to me,
you are worthy
of my love."

"I spoke words of disbelief,
look, I have returned to faith.
I come now,
all soul,
to your command.

I did not recognize
your kingly nature.
I was rude,
I pushed my beast-self forward
in front of you."

"Now I have made a lamp

out of your forgiveness.
I repent.
I drop opposition.

Here are my sword and my shroud.
My neck is bent toward you.
Strike."

"You speak of bitter separation.
Do whatever you wish,
only do not do this."

The Advocate Within

"Your conscience inside you
pleads for me,
an unbroken intercessor,
even when I am not there.

What pleads for me in you
is your noble nature.

I relied on that goodness,
and my heart dared to sin."

"Have mercy,
without self-admiration,
O angry one,

O you whose nature
is better than a hundred loads of
honey."

She spoke this way,
gracious, winning,
and then a storm of weeping rose
in her.

When tears and sobs
spilled beyond all bounds—
from one who was captivating
even without tears—

it was as though from that rain
a lightning-flash appeared,
and it threw a spark of fire
into the lonely man's heart.

She whose beauty
already enslaved men,
what happens
when she plays the humble slave?

She whose pride
made your heart tremble,
what will you do
when she falls crying before you?

She whose disdain
made your soul bleed,
what happens
when she turns to pleading?

She whose tyranny
snared us,

what plea remains
when she herself becomes the
pleader?

Trap God Wove

Desire is dressed up for men,
made attractive,
by God's arranging.

How can anyone escape
what God has arranged?

Since He created woman
so that Adam might take comfort,
how can Adam be parted from
Eve?

Even if a man is Rustam son of Zāl,
even if he outmatches Hamza in
courage,
in authority he becomes captive
to his old woman,
his wife.

Even the Prophet—
whose words made the world
obedient—
would cry,
"Speak to me, O Humayrā!"

Water rushes in
and seems to extinguish fire,
yet fire, hidden under the
cauldron,
makes water boil.

When a cauldron stands between
them,
O king,
the fire consumes the water
and turns it into air.

Outwardly,
you may dominate your wife,
like water overcoming flame.

But inwardly,
you are the one overcome,
seeking her love.

This is the mark of Man:
love belongs to him.

Other animals lack that love,
and their lack
is from their lesser rank.

Two Kinds Of Strength

The Prophet said:
women prevail greatly
over the wise and intelligent,

while ignorant men prevail over
women,

because in them
the fierceness of the animal is
trapped.

They lack tenderness,
kindness, affection,
because animality overpowers
their human nature.

Love and tenderness
are human qualities.

Anger and lust
are animal qualities.

And woman—
she is a ray from God.

She is not merely
an earthly beloved.

She is creative,
you could even say,
she is not "made"
in the ordinary way we imagine
created things.

Regret After The Storm

Then the man felt sorrow
for his words,
like a tyrannical official
regretting tyranny
at the hour of death.

He said,
"How did I become the enemy
of the life of my soul?

How did I kick
the head of my own soul?"

When Divine destiny comes,
it wraps the sight in cloth,
so the intellect cannot tell
foot from head.

When destiny passes,
the intellect devours itself with
grief,
rips the veil,
and tears its own chest.

He said,
"O wife, I repent.

If I have been an unbeliever,
I will become a Muslim.

I have sinned against you,
have mercy.

Do not pull me up
all at once,
root and foundation,

do not ruin me completely."

When an old unbeliever truly
repents,
his pleading for pardon
becomes Islam.

For He is the merciful,
the lavish Lord.

Both existence and nonexistence
are in love with Him.

Both faith and unbelief
are lovers of that Majesty.

Both copper and silver
are slaves to that Elixir.

Night Between Two Servants

(Verses 2447-2481)

Summary

This passage enters the secret interior of Pharaoh and lets him speak in a voice of grief, bewilderment, and reluctant surrender before God. Though outwardly he stands as Moses' enemy, inwardly he knows himself to be bound by a destiny he did not choose. He sees that the same Divine will that made Moses radiant has left him in darkness. His kingship, his boasts, and even the people's praise become signs of eclipse rather than glory.

The poem then turns from personal lament to a deeper Sufi unveiling. In the realm of forms and colours, opposites appear: Moses and Pharaoh, light and dark, rose and thorn, oil and water. But beneath these contrasts is colorlessness, the undivided Unity of God, where conflict disappears. Rumi leads the reader

toward tawhid, the seeing of all multiplicity as emerging from the One. Bewilderment becomes a sacred threshold here: the ruin is where the treasure lies, and what looks like rebellion may itself be part of a hidden Divine wisdom.

Verses of the Poem

Hidden Weeping

Moses and Pharaoh,
both were servants of the Real.

Outwardly,
one walked the guided path,
the other seemed lost.

By day,
Moses cried out in prayer to God.

At midnight,
Pharaoh too began to weep,

saying,
"O God,
what is this chain around my neck?

If this chain were not here,
who would keep saying,
'I am, I am'?"

By the same decree
that made Moses shine with light,
You made me dark.

By the same will
that made his face moon-bright,
You blackened the moon
within my soul.

My star was never greater than the moon.
If even the moon is eclipsed,
what help is there for me?

When they beat drums for me,
calling me lord and king,
it is like the banging of metal bowls
when the moon is eclipsed.

They strike and shout,
and with all that noise
they only disgrace the moon.

I am Pharaoh,
and sorrow upon sorrow,
because of what the people make of me.

Their cry of
"My supreme lord"
is like those blows on the bowl,
announcing only my eclipse.

The Axe In The Forest

Moses and I,
we are both Your servants.

But Your axe
moves through Your forest,

making one green branch
stand firm and flourish,

while another
is left untended.

What power has a branch
against the axe?

No branch escapes
the axe's reach.

By the truth
of the strength in that axe,
make these twisted deeds of ours
straight and whole.

Then Pharaoh said within himself,
"How strange.

All through the night
I cry,
'Our Lord.'

In secret
I become lowly,
softened,
at peace.

But when I come before Moses,
what happens to me?"

Base gold
may be coated many times,
yet before the fire
its false color turns black.

Are not my heart and body
under His command?

One moment
He makes me the kernel,
another moment
the husk.

When He commands me
to be a field of grain,
I grow green.

When He commands me

to be withered and ugly,
I turn yellow.

At one moment
He makes me a moon.

At another,
He makes me dark.

What is God's action
but this?

Before the bat of His decree,
before the command
"Be, and it is,"
we fly like balls
through space,
and beyond space.

Beyond Color

When colorlessness,
pure Unity,
became caught in color,
in the world of forms,

then one Moses
came into conflict
with another Moses.

But when you return
to the colorlessness
that was yours before,

Moses and Pharaoh
are at peace.

If you ask
about this mystery,

how could the world of color
ever be free of conflict?

The wonder is this:

color rose
from the Colorless.

How then did color
begin to war
with its own source?

Oil was drawn from water,
yet oil and water
stand apart.

The rose comes from the thorn,
and the thorn from the rose,
yet they still seem
to quarrel with one another.

Or perhaps
it is not truly war.

Perhaps it serves

a hidden purpose.

Perhaps it is an art,
like the staged arguing
of those who sell donkeys.

Or perhaps
it is neither this
nor that.

Perhaps it is bewilderment.

And the treasure
is always sought
in the ruin.

The Ruin And The Treasure

What you imagine
to be the treasure
may be the very illusion
that makes you lose it.

Know this:

opinions, fancies,
and self-made judgments
are like cultivated ground.

The treasure
is not hidden
in what has been neatly planted.

In cultivated ground
there is occupation,
there is growth,
there is opposition.

Nonexistence
is ashamed before all that existence.

Do not think
that existence cried out
to be saved from nonexistence.

No—
it was nonexistence
that drove existence away.

Do not say,
"I am running from nonexistence."

No.
It is fleeing from you.

Stop there.

Outwardly,
it seems to call you toward itself.

Inwardly,
it beats you back
with the staff of refusal.

O clear-hearted one,

the shoes are on the wrong feet.

Know this:

the rebellion of Pharaoh
was, in truth,
set in motion by Moses.

Drawn By Hidden Suns

(Verses 2482-2508)

Summary

This poem begins with a question about the earth suspended in the heavens. What first appears to be a debate about nature becomes a spiritual teaching. Rumi turns from the philosopher's explanation of attraction and repulsion to a deeper reality: souls, too, are drawn or driven by invisible forces. The hearts of the Friends of God, the perfected saints, have a spiritual gravity. Those who oppose truth, like Pharaoh in Quranic memory, are not merely mistaken but pushed farther from light by their own resistance.

The passage then shifts toward spiritual hierarchy and guidance. Human reason has power, but the saints stand beyond ordinary reason as "the intellect of intellect," and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is invoked as the supreme

pattern of that authority. The prophet may look outwardly alone and merely human, yet within him are unseen worlds. The central image is this hiddenness: a sun in a mote, a lion in lamb's wool, an ocean beneath straw. The poem asks the reader to look beyond appearances, beyond doubt and ego, until the heart recognizes the secret radiance concealed in humble form.

Verses of the Poem

The Pull Of Rejection

A poor philosopher,
certain the sky is an egg,
and the earth its yolk,

was asked,
"How does this earth remain
in the middle of so vast a sky,

hanging in the air like a lamp,
not falling down,
not rising up?"

He said,
"It stays there
because the sky draws it
from all six directions.

The heavens are like a vault of
lodestone,
and the earth,
like iron,
is held in the middle."

Another replied,
"How could the pure sky
pull the dark earth to itself?

No,
it drives it away
from every side.

And so the earth stays suspended,
held there
amid violent currents."

So too,
through the repelling force
of the hearts of the perfected saints,

the spirits of the Pharaoh-like
remain far off,
left in ruin.

And because they are refused
by this world

and by the next,

these lost ones
are left with neither this
nor that.

If you turn your face away
from the servants of the Almighty,

know that they too
are weary
of your presence.

They carry amber.
When they reveal it,

the straw of your being
goes wild
with longing.

When they hide that amber,
your obedience
quickly turns to rebellion.

Before The Friends Of God

Your state before them
is like the animal realm
before the human,

held fast,
ruled over,
unable to stand on its own.

Know this well, my friend,
humanity itself

lies under the power of the saints,
just as animals
live beneath the rule of man.

Ahmad,
Muhammad, peace be upon him,
rightly called all people his servants.

Read the word:
"Say, O My servants."

Your intellect
is like a camel-driver,
and you are the camel.

It pulls you here and there
under its hard command.

But the saints
are the intellect of intellect.

All minds,
from first to last,
are like camels before them.

Look carefully.
There is one guide,

and a hundred thousand souls
moving behind him.

What is a guide,
what is a driver,

before the one
who sees the Sun?

Ask for an eye
that can behold it.

The world lies pinned in night,
and day itself waits
for the sun.

Here is a sun
hidden in a speck of dust.

Here is a fierce lion
inside a lamb's fleece.

Here is an ocean
hidden under straw.

Do not tread on this straw
with doubt
and trembling.

Yet even that hesitation,
that uncertainty in the foolish
heart,
is a mercy from God
toward the spiritual guide.

The Hidden Vastness

Every prophet
came into this world alone.

He seemed solitary,
yet within him
were a hundred unseen worlds.

By his power
he enchanted the universe,
and wrapped
that vastness
inside a little human frame.

The foolish saw him
as lonely,
as weak.

But how is weak
the one who keeps company
with the King?

The foolish said,
"He is only a man."

Woe to the one
who does not think
of the end.

The Camel And The Heart

(Verses 2509–2568)

Summary

Rumi retells the story of the people of Thamud and the she-camel of the prophet Salih, but he does not leave it as history alone. The camel becomes a sacred sign, and then more than a sign: it becomes an image of the saint's vulnerable body, while Salih himself becomes an image of the unharmed spirit, joined to God. The people attack what is outward and visible, not realizing that to wound the friend of God is to offend the Divine trust hidden within him.

The passage then moves through warning, delay, and judgment. The lost foal becomes the saint's heart, something that might still be won back through repentance, goodness, and reverence. But the people fail to return, and the three days unfold until their doom is sealed. Even after justice descends, Salih weeps.

His mind knows their corruption, yet mercy still pours through him. That is part of the mystery here: the saint sees clearly, but compassion still rises without calculation, like a drop from the Ocean of Divine Bounty. The poem warns against envy, mockery, and blind conformity, while calling the reader to honour the people of God, whose outer form may seem ordinary, even while the secret of heaven rests within them.

Verses of the Poem

A Hidden Trust

The she-camel of Salih
was only a camel in outward form.
But that bitter, graceless tribe,
in their blindness,
hamstrung her and killed her.

Because she shared the water,
they turned against her.
They were blind to bread,
blind to water,
blind to the Giver of blessing.

God's she-camel drank
from stream and cloud.
In truth,
they were withholding God's own
water
from God.

That camel of Salih became,
like the bodies of the righteous,
a place of ambush
where ruin waited
for the wicked.

So the command was fulfilled,
"Let God's she-camel
have her share of the water."
And through that word
death and sorrow
were decreed for that people.

Vengeance,
which serves the Divine command,
asked from them
the blood-price of a whole city
for a single camel.

The Spirit Unharmed

His spirit is like Salih,
and his body is the she-camel.
The spirit is joined to God,
the body remains in need
and distress.

The spirit of Salih
cannot be touched by injury.
The blows fall on the camel,
not on the essence.
No one conquers
the hearts of the saints.

Harm reaches only the shell,
never the pearl.
The Salih-spirit cannot be
wounded.
The light of God
does not lie open
to the assault of unbelief.

The Soul,
by God's decree,
was joined to an earthly body,
so that the faithless might strike it
and bring suffering on themselves,

not knowing
that to wound this body
is to wound the One
to whom it belongs.
The water in this jar
is joined
to the water of the river.

God bound the spirit
to a body,
so that the prophet or saint
might become
a refuge for the world.

So become a servant
to the camel,
the saint's body,
that you may become
a fellow-servant
of the Salih-spirit.

Three Days

Salih said to his people,
"Since you have shown this envy,
the punishment of God
will come upon you
after three days.

After three more days,
from the Taker of life,
a calamity will arrive,
and it will bear
three signs."

The color of your faces
will change,
one after another,
until every face
is marked.

On the first day
your faces will turn saffron-yellow.

On the second,
they will turn red
like crimson blossom.
On the third,
all your faces
will become black.

Then the vengeance of God
will descend.

If you want a sign
that this warning is true,
look—
the she-camel's young one
has fled toward the mountains.

If you can seize him,
there may still be help for you.
If not,
the bird of hope
has slipped the snare
and flown.

None of them
could catch the foal.
He ran into the mountains
and vanished.

Then Salih said,
"You see now—
destiny has been sealed.
The phantom of your hope
has lost its head."

The Lost Foal

What is the she-camel's foal?
It is the saint's heart.

You may yet draw it back
to its place
through goodness
and reverent devotion.

If his heart returns to you,
you are saved
from that punishment.
If not,
then despair is yours,
and remorse will leave you
biting your own arms.

When they heard
that dark warning,
their eyes fell downward,
and they waited.

On the first day,
they saw their faces yellow.
Despair was already breathing
through their sighs.

On the second day,
all faces turned red.
The hour for hope,

the hour for repentance,
had passed.

On the third day,
every face became black.
Then Salih's word
stood plain and undeniable.

When they were thrown
into utter despair,
they dropped to their knees
like birds crouching low.

Gabriel, the trustworthy,
brought in the Quran
the image of their kneeling—
jathimin,
fallen down,
collapsed in dread.

So kneel now
while the saints are teaching you,
and warning you
to fear a kneeling
like theirs.

They were waiting
for the blow of vengeance.
And vengeance came,
and erased that town.

Smoke Over The Town

Salih came out
from his solitude
and returned to the town.
He saw it wrapped
in smoke and burning heat.

He heard wailing
rising from their limbs.
The crying was clear,
though the criers
could not be seen.

He heard lament
issuing from their bones.
From their spirits
came tears of blood,
falling
like hail.

Salih heard it,
and he began to weep.
He lamented
for those
who themselves were lamenting.

He said,
"O people
who lived in vanity,
for your sake
I wept before God.

God said to me,

‘Be patient
with their wrongdoing.
Counsel them still.
Little remains
of their appointed time.’

I answered,
‘Counsel has been shut off
by the harshness they showed.
The milk of counsel
flows from love
and gladness.

But they have wounded me
again and again,
until the milk of counsel
has curdled
in my veins.’”

Then God said,
“I will grant you a gift.
I will lay a healing plaster
on those wounds.”

And God made my heart
clear as the sky.
He swept your cruelty
out of my mind.

So I returned again
to admonish you.
I spoke in parables.
I offered words
sweet as sugar.

I drew fresh milk
from sweetness itself.
I mingled milk and honey
in my speech.

But in you
those words became poison,
because poison was already rooted
in your foundation.

Grief And Mercy

Why should I grieve
when grief itself
has been cast down?
You were the grief,
O stubborn people.

Does anyone mourn
when sorrow dies?
Does anyone tear his hair
when a wound is healed?

Then he turned inward
and said to himself,
“O mourner,
these people are not worth
your mourning.”

Recite it rightly—

do not dwell on my broken
retelling—
"Say:
How should I grieve
for an unjust people?"

And yet,
again,
weeping rose
in his eye and heart.
A compassion without cause
shone out from within him.

He shed tears
like falling drops,
bewildered,
as if one unbidden drop
had come
from the Ocean of Bounty.

His intellect said,
"Why this weeping?
Should one weep
for scoffers like these?

Tell me,
for what are you weeping?
For their deceit?
For the army of their miserable
hatreds?
For their dark hearts,
thick with rust?

For their snake-like tongues,
full of venom?
For their dog-like breath and teeth?
For mouths and eyes
swarming like scorpions?

For their arguments,
their sneering,
their mockery?
Give thanks instead
that God has restrained them.

Their hands are crooked,
their feet are crooked,
their eyes are crooked.
Their love is crooked,
their peace is crooked,
their anger is crooked."

For the sake
of blind imitation,
for the sake
of inherited custom,
they trampled
the camels of Reason,
that venerable guide.

They did not want a guide.
Each of them had become
like an old donkey,

watching the eyes and ears of
others,
performing empty piety
for show.

God brings the worshippers
from Paradise itself,
so that they may witness
the children of Hellfire.

The Hidden Taste Of Souls

(Verses 2569–2615)

Summary

In these verses, Rumi shows that people who outwardly live side by side may belong inwardly to utterly different destinies. The people of light and the people of fire appear mixed together, like gold in earth or sweet water beside bitter, yet a hidden barrier remains between them. What seems pleasant may conceal poison, and what appears harsh may become medicine. The difference cannot always be seen by the ordinary eye; it is known fully only in the end, when the truth of every soul is uncovered.

The passage then turns toward spiritual ripening. Some realities reveal themselves quickly, others only after years, death, or the Resurrection. Rumi reminds the reader that everything unfolds by God's appointed term. He also

explains that what is safe for a saint may be destructive for a seeker still under discipline. This becomes clear from the example of Solomon: his prayer was not for greed, but for mercy and spiritual caution. He knew worldly power is dangerous unless joined to Divine protection, inward maturity, and complete reliance on God.

Verses of the Poem

One Shop, Two Destinies

See how the people of the Fire,
and the people of Paradise,
appear to live
in the same marketplace.

Yet between them
stands a barrier,
one they do not cross.

God has mingled
the people of fire,
and the people of light,
yet between them
He has raised Mount Qaf,
that unseen mountain
of separation.

He has mixed them
as earth and gold
are mixed in the mine.
Yet between them
lie a hundred deserts,
a hundred caravan-rests.

They are strung together
like pearls
and black beads
on one necklace,
lodging together
for a single night,
before the parting comes.

One half of the sea
is sweet as sugar,
sweet in taste,
moon-bright in colour.

The other half
is bitter
like serpent's venom,
bitter in taste,
black as pitch.

Wave strikes wave,
below and above,

as though they clash
in one sea.

This collision you see
belongs to the narrow frame of
appearance.
In truth, spirits mingle
in peace
or in war.

The waves of peace
strike one another
and uproot hatred
from the breast.

The waves of war
take another form,
overturning love,
scattering it,
confusing it.

The Sweet And The Bitter

Love draws
the bitter toward the sweet,
for the root of every true love
is rightness,
and the soul's secret pull
toward what is sound.

Wrath drags
the sweet toward bitterness.
How could bitterness
ever truly belong
with sweetness?

But this outer eye
does not see
what is sweet
and what is bitter.

These are seen
through the window
of the end.

The eye that sees the end
sees truly.
The eye that sees only the stable,
only the feeding trough,
is caught in illusion
and error.

How many seem
sweet as sugar,
while poison
lies hidden
inside the sweetness.

One person, more discerning,
knows it by the scent.

Another knows
only when it touches
the lips
and teeth.

Then the lips reject it
before it reaches the throat,
though the Devil cries,
"Eat."

For another,
it reveals itself
only in the throat.

For another,
only in the body.

For another,
its teaching comes
as burning pain
in what leaves the body.
The way it exits
reveals
what entered.

For another,
it shows itself
after days,
or months.

For another,
only after death,
from the depth
of the grave.

And even if he is granted
a delay there,
still it will be uncovered
on the Day of Resurrection.

Ripening In Time

Every sweetness of this world,
every sugar-piece
the heart desires,
has its appointed term
under the turning sky.

Years are needed
before the ruby,
beneath the sun,
receives its full colour,
its brilliance,
its shining.

Vegetables ripen
in two months.

The red rose
comes to fullness
in a year.

For this reason
God the Exalted
speaks in Surat al-Anam
of the appointed term,
the ajal,
the fixed moment
for each thing.

You have heard this.
May every hair of you
become an ear.

This is not mere speech.
It is the Water of Life.
If you have drunk of it,
may it bless you.

Call it the Water of Life,
not discourse.
See how a fresh spirit
has entered
the old letters.

Poison Turned Medicine

Now, my friend,
listen to another saying,
clear as the soul
to the inwardly awake,
veiled and difficult
to others.

In a certain station,
by Divine ordering,
even poison
and the serpent
can be digested.

In one place,
a thing is poison.
In another,
medicine.

In one place,
it is unbelief.
In another,
it is accepted.

There,
it harms the soul.
Here,
it becomes a remedy.

The unripe grape
is sour in its juice.
But when it ripens
into the grape,
it becomes sweet
and good.

Then again,
inside the wine-jar,
it becomes bitter
and forbidden.

Yet as vinegar,
how fine it is,
how fitting
as a seasoning.

The Saint And The Seeker

The disciple

must not presume
to do what the saint can do.

Sweetmeat does not harm
the physician,
but it harms the sick.

Frost and snow
do no injury
to the ripe grape,
but they wound
the young fruit.

The traveler on the path
is still on the road.
He has not yet become
one to whom grace has granted
full pardon,
former and latter.

If the saint drinks poison,
it becomes antidote.

If the seeker drinks it,
his mind grows dark.

So Solomon said,
"My Lord, grant me a kingdom
that should not belong
to anyone after me."

That is,
"Give this sovereignty
to none but me."

It sounds like jealousy,
but it was not jealousy.

Read with the soul
the secret
of "none after me."
Do not think
its inward meaning
comes from Solomon's greed.

No.
In kingship
he saw a hundred dangers.

Worldly rule,
in every strand of it,
is fear for the head.

Fear for the head,
fear for the heart,
fear for religion.
There is almost no trial
like this.

So one would need
the vast aspiration
of a Solomon
to pass safely
through these countless colours,

these perfumes,
these glittering seductions
of the world.

Even he,
with all his strength of spirit,
felt the waves
of that kingdom
closing over his breath.

Dust of sorrow
settled on him from it.

And because he knew that burden,
he took pity
on all the kings of the earth.

So he interceded,
saying in meaning:

"If You give this kingdom
to anyone,
give with it
the perfection
You gave to me.

Whoever receives it
with that grace,
he is Solomon too,
and I am he.

He is not 'after me.'
He is with me.
And beyond even 'with me,'
there is no rivalry here."

I ought to unfold
this secret further.

But now,
I return
to the tale
of the man and his wife.

Beneath The House Of Clay

(Verses 2616–2641)

Summary

Rumi turns a domestic argument into a mirror of the inner life. The husband and wife are not merely two people in a story. They become symbols of reason and the lower self, living together in the house of the body, each pulling in a different direction. The nafs reaches for bread, status, security, and satisfaction, while reason, in its true nature, leans toward the love of God. Their conflict is the human condition.

The passage then deepens into a teaching about outer forms and inner truth. Prayer, fasting, kindness, and devotion all have visible shapes, but those shapes can either reveal something real or imitate it falsely. A hypocrite may copy the gestures of love for God, just as someone drunk on sour curds mimics a person

drunk on wine. What matters is the light by which one sees. When perception is illumined by God, one no longer depends only on appearances, because Love itself becomes the proof. Form still points toward meaning, but the two are never identical.

Verses of the Poem

Hidden Quarrel

The heart of one who is sincere
keeps searching
for the lesson

hidden in the quarrel
between husband and wife.

That story of their conflict
has already been told.

Know its inward meaning.

That man and woman
are your own lower self and your
reason.

These two,
the nafs and the intellect,
are both necessary

for good and evil
to appear in this earthly house.

And in this house of dust,
these two companions
struggle with one another,

day and night.

The wife longs
for what a household needs—

for bread,
for food,
for standing,
for a name in the world.

So too the lower self,
like that wife,

seeks whatever might satisfy desire.

At one moment,
it uses humility.

At another,
it reaches for control.

But reason
is not truly absorbed in these
things.

Its mind is turned elsewhere.

Within it
there is only
love for God.

Though the inward meaning of
this tale
is this snare,
this baited trap,

listen now
to the outer story as well,
in its full form.

For if spiritual meaning alone were
enough,
the making of the world
would have been empty.

If love were only inward thought
and hidden reality,

then fasting and prayer
would never have taken visible
form.

The gifts lovers give each other
are, in one sense,
only forms.

Yet those forms bear witness
to the love

still concealed
within the secret heart.

An outward kindness
testifies

to an inward tenderness,
dear friend.

But a sign is not always true.

At times it speaks rightly.

At times it lies.

One person is drunk on wine,
another only on sour curds.

True And False Signs

The one who has drunk sour curds
may act intoxicated,

shouting wildly,
reeling about,

pretending his head is heavy
with wine.

So too the hypocrite
gives himself to fasting and prayer

so people may imagine
he is drunk
with devotion to God.

In brief,

outward acts
are not the same
as inward states.

They are signs only,
pointing toward what is hidden.

O Lord,
grant us the discernment we long
for,

that we may know
the false sign
from the true.

Do you know
how perception becomes clear?

It happens
when perception begins to see
by the light of God.

And even when no outer sign
appears,
the cause itself
may reveal what is hidden—

as kinship
can tell you
that love is there.

When the light of God
enters the field of perception,

you are no longer enslaved
to sign
or cause.

Then Love itself
casts a spark within.

It grows strong.

It makes the illumined one
free from needing proofs.

Such a one
has no need of the marks of love,

because Love itself
has poured its radiance
across the sky of the heart.

There are many finer details
still to be spoken
before this matter is complete.

But seek them for yourself.

And now,
farewell.

Near And Far

As for the one
who has caught the inner meaning
within this outer form,

form is both near
to meaning,
and far from it.

In the way of indication,
they are like sap and tree.

One reveals the other.

But when you turn
to what each truly is in itself,

they stand
far apart.

The Heart Gives Its Word

(Verses 2642–2702)

Summary

The husband finally yields to his wife and promises complete obedience, but she still wonders whether his surrender is sincere. To prove himself, he swears by God, then turns to the mystery of Adam, the angels, and the believing heart. In doing so, he says something deeper than an oath: true reality is not held by heaven or earth, but by the heart made spacious through faith. God's mercy, he says, is wider than all judgment, and his words are not a trap but a plea born from love, humility, and longing.

Then the path turns toward action. The wife points him toward the living saintly ruler, the Divine vicegerent, whose presence transforms Baghdad like spring. She teaches that nearness to such a king is alchemy for the soul. The

husband hesitates, knowing he has no credentials, and this becomes the deeper teaching: before God and His friends, helplessness is itself the proof. What opens the way is not cleverness, but truthful need, poverty of self, and the light of inward sincerity.

Verses of the Poem

The Vow

Let me leave aside
definitions, essences,
all the names things wear,

and tell what passed
between those two
moon-faced ones.

The Arab said,

I will not resist you now.
The choice is yours.
Draw the sword
from its sheath.

Whatever you command,
I will do.
I will not stop
to measure gain or loss,

good or harm.

I will vanish
inside your being,
because I love you.

And love,
it makes one blind,
it makes one deaf.

The wife said,

How do I know
you are truly my companion?

Perhaps this surrender
is a trick.
Perhaps you want
to uncover my secret.

He said,

By God,
who knows
the deepest hidden thought,

who shaped Adam,

pure and chosen,
out of dust,

who placed within
that small human frame
the meanings
of the Tablets
and the world of spirits,

who taught him the Names,
so that from the beginning
he disclosed realities
reaching to everlasting—

so that even the angels
were astonished
by what they learned through him,

and received from his praise
a holiness beyond
what they had before.

What shone to them
through Adam
could not be contained
by the breadth of the heavens.

Beside the vastness
of that pure spirit,
the seven heavens
became narrow.

Has not the Prophet said
that God says,

I am not contained
in high or low,
in any dimension of place.

I am not held
by earth,
or heaven,
or even the highest sphere.

Know this with certainty,
noble one.

But I am contained
in the heart
of the true believer.
How wondrous that is.

If you seek Me,
look there.

And He has said,

Enter among My servants.

There you will find
a garden made
of beholding Me.

Even the highest heaven,

for all its far-spreading light,
was bewildered
before that reality.

Yes, the empyrean is immense,
but what is form
when Reality arrives?

Then the angels said to Adam,

Before this,
we felt a strange kinship
with the dust of earth.

There we sowed
the seed of worship,
and we wondered
at this bond.

How had we,
whose nature is heavenly,
come to love
what was made of dust?

Why should light
feel intimacy
with darkness?
How could light
dwell with darkness?

Adam,
that friendship
came from your fragrance.

The earth was already
the warp and weft
of your body.

From this place
your earthly form was woven,
and in this same place
your pure light
was hidden.

What our souls received
from your spirit
had once been shining
through the dust.

We were on the earth,
yet unaware of earth,
unaware of the treasure
buried there.

And when God commanded us
to depart from that dwelling,
our mouths turned bitter
with grief.

We even argued, saying,

O God,
who will come after us?

Will You exchange
the splendor of our praise
and glorification
for chatter
and empty noise?

Then the decree of God
spread out for us
the carpet of forbearance.

And He said,

Speak boldly.
Do not be afraid.
Say whatever rises
to your tongues,

as children speak
before their father.

What if your words
seem unworthy?
My mercy comes
before My wrath.

To make this known,
I place within you
bewilderment
and doubt,

so that you may speak
and I will not be offended.

Then no denier
of My clemency
will dare
to deny it.

Within My mercy,
at every moment,
the mercies
of a hundred fathers
and a hundred mothers
are born
and disappear.

Their mercy
is only foam
on the sea of My mercy.

The foam appears,
then vanishes.
The sea remains.

What can I say?

Besides that pearl
of Divine mercy,
human tenderness
is only foam
of foam
of foam.

By the truth

of that foam,
by the truth
of that pure sea,

these words of mine
are not a test,
and not empty.

They rise from love,
from sincerity,
from humility.

I swear it
by the truth
of the One
toward whom I turn.

If this affection
seems like a trial to you,
then test it
for one moment.

Do not hide your secret,
so that mine
may also be revealed.

Command me
in anything
I am able to do.

Do not conceal your heart,
so my own heart
may become visible too,

and so I may accept
whatever lies
within my power.

What can I do?
What remedy do I have?

Look at the state
my soul is in.

Her Counsel

Then the wife said,

A sun has risen.
A whole world
has received light from him.

The Vicegerent
of the All-Merciful,
the Khalifa
of the Creator—

through him,
Baghdad blooms
like spring.

If you find a way
to that king,
you too will become kingly.

How long
will you keep wandering
behind affliction
after affliction?

The company
of the fortunate
is like the Elixir.

No—
how could any elixir
be compared
to the grace
of their gaze?

The eye of Ahmad—
Muhammad—
fell upon Abu Bakr,

and through one act
of faith
he became Siddiq,
the utterly truthful one.

The husband said,

How can I go
to meet the king?

How can I approach him
without some occasion,
some opening?

Even a craft
needs tools.
How could this be done
without a means?

Like Majnun—

when he heard
that Layla
was a little unwell,
he cried out,

How can I go to her
without an excuse?

And if I do not visit
when she is ill,
what misery is mine.

If only I were
a skilled physician,
I would go on foot
to Layla
before anyone else.

God says to us,
Come.

In this invitation
He shows us
the way beyond shame.

If bats had sight,
if they could bear the sun,
they too would fly
in daylight
and rejoice.

The wife said,

When the generous king
comes out into the field,
lack of means itself
becomes a means.

For means belong
to self-claiming,
to the illusion
of independent being.

The real secret
lies in helplessness,
in poverty before God,
in non-self.

He said,

How can I trade
without means,
unless I show plainly
that I have none?

I need some proof
of my need,
so the king may look on me
with mercy.

Mere words,
mere display—
such testimony
is always rejected
before the Supreme Judge.

Bring me a witness
other than talk
and outward show,

so that the beautiful king
may have compassion.

He asks for truth
as witness
to a poor man's state,

so that the inner light
of his poverty
may speak
without words.

A Vessel for the Vastness

(Verses 2703–2734)

Summary

The wife speaks first, and her words carry a hidden wisdom greater than she herself seems to know. She urges her husband to take their little store of rainwater and offer it to the king. Outwardly, it is a poor family's humble gift. Inwardly, it is the soul offering its small, limited life to the Divine. The jug becomes the body, and the water inside it becomes the mixed, salty life of the senses, which must be purified and guarded if it is to reach the Sea of Reality.

The husband, however, is sincere yet ignorant. He treasures the little he has because he has never seen the river. This is Rumi's tender irony: the ego prizes its drop, not knowing the ocean of God already flows nearby. The journey from

desert to Baghdad becomes the soul's journey from scarcity to abundance, from selfhood to surrender.

The wife's final prayer lifts the whole scene into devotion. What seems like ordinary water becomes a sign of Kawthar, the paradisal fountain of Divine bounty. The passage quietly teaches tawhid, trust, and self-emptying: offer what you are, keep it pure, and let the drop find its way to the Sea.

Verses of the Poem

The Small Gift

The wife said,
When people rise with all their
strength,
and empty themselves
of self,
that is true sincerity.

We have this rainwater
in the jug.
It is your possession,
your wealth,
your one means.

Take this jug,
carry it,
offer it as a gift
before the King of kings.

Say,
We have nothing but this.
In the desert,
nothing is better
than water.

His treasury may overflow
with gold
and jewels,
yet water like this
is rare.

What is this jug?
It is our narrow body.
Inside it
is the salty water
of the senses.

My Lord,
receive this jar,
this jug of mine,
by the grace of the verse:
God has purchased
from the believers
their lives and their wealth

for Paradise.

The Five Spouts

This jug has five spouts,
the five senses.
Keep its water clear,
guard it
from every stain.

Then a path may open
from this jug
to the Sea,
and the jug itself
may take on
the nature of the Sea.

So when you bring it
as an offering
to the King,
He may find it pure,
and accept it.

Then its water
will no longer end.
A hundred worlds
could be filled
from this one jug.

Seal its openings.
Keep filling it
from the great Jar of Reality.
For God has said,
Close your eyes
to empty desire.

Proud In Poverty

But the husband,
swollen with pride,
thought,
Who has a gift like this?
Surely this is worthy
of such a King.

The wife did not know
that in Baghdad,
along the open road,
there runs a mighty river,
sweet as sugar,

flowing through the city
like a sea,
filled with boats
and nets.

Go to the Sultan,
see that majesty,
that kingdom.
See what the Quranic gardens
suggest,
gardens beneath which
rivers flow.

Our senses,
our knowing,

all we take pride in,
are only one drop
in those rivers.

Wrapped In Certainty

So the wife wrapped
the rainwater jug
in felt,
stitched it closed,
and sealed it,

because the Arab was utterly
certain
that this was
a priceless gift
for the King.

Yes, said the husband,
tie the mouth of the jug well.
Be careful.
This gift
will bring us gain.

Sew it in felt,
so the King may break his fast
with what we bring.

For nowhere in the world
is there water like this.
No water is purer.

He spoke this way
because people like him
have always lived half-blind,
drinking bitter, briny water.

A bird raised
in salt marshes,
how would it know
where to find
clear sweetness?

You whose home
is the bitter spring,
how could you know
the Shatt,
the Jayhun,
the Euphrates?

You who have not escaped
this passing caravanserai,
this material world,
how could you understand
self-annihilation,
mystic intoxication,
the heart's expansion?

And even if you speak of them,
perhaps you know them only
as inherited words,
passed down
from father and grandfather.

To you,

these names are only letters,
like a child reciting
abjad and hawwaz,
plain on the tongue,
far from the living meaning.

Crossing The Desert

Then the Arab lifted the jug
and set out.
Day and night
he carried it
on the long road.

He trembled for it,
afraid of Fortune's tricks,
yet still he brought it
from the desert
to the city.

At home,
his wife spread the prayer rug
and turned to supplication.

She made
Rabbi sallim,
Save us, O Lord,
the rhythm of her prayer.

She cried,
Protect our water
from thieves and fools.
My Lord,
let that pearl
reach the Sea.

Though my husband is clever,
full of schemes,
the pearl has thousands
of enemies.

Pearl?
No, more than pearl.
This is Kawthar's water.
The pearl itself
is born
from a drop of this.

At The Door Of Mercy

(Verses 2735–2772)

Summary

In these verses, a weary husband finally reaches the Caliph's court, a place Rumi presents as an image of overflowing mercy. There, rich and poor, lowly and exalted, all stand under one generosity. The outer court becomes a sign of the Divine Court, where giving is not accidental but essential. Need itself has a hidden dignity, because the beggar reveals the beauty of the Giver, just as a mirror reveals the beauty of a face.

Then the teaching turns inward. Rumi distinguishes between the one who longs for God Himself and the one who seeks worldly benefit while appearing poor. He warns that ideas, images, and spiritual poses are not the Real. Worldly joy and grief are like painted expressions beside the living realities of the spirit.

The passage ends with an invitation to undress from self and appearance, and to enter the bath of Reality, where the soul, not the outer form, begins to know.

Verses of the Poem

The Burden Carried

By the wife's prayers,
by her grieving cries,
by the husband's worry,
and by his patient strength
beneath so heavy a load,

he carried it on, without delay,
safe from thieves,
untouched by stone,
until he reached the seat of the
Caliph,
the court of the Caliphate.

There he saw a court of generosity.
The poor had cast their nets there.

At every moment,
someone in need
left that threshold
with a gift in hand,
with a robe of honour on his
shoulders.

It was like sun and rain.

More than that,
it was like Paradise,

for unbeliever and believer,
for the good
and for the not yet good.

He saw some already graced,
standing near in favour.
He saw others risen to their feet,
waiting for command.

The high and the low,
from Solomon to the ant,
seemed quickened into life,

as the world will rise alive
at the blast of the Trumpet
on the Day of Resurrection.

Those devoted only to outer form
were wrapped in pearls.
Those who sought the Real
had found the Sea of Reality.

Those with no aspiration

had suddenly become full of longing.
And those of lofty aspiration,
what joy they had reached.

Beggar And Gift

Then a cry came to his ears:

Come, seeker.
Bounty longs for beggars.
It needs them,
as a beggar needs bread.

Generosity searches
for the poor and needy,
as a beautiful face
searches for a clear mirror.

The mirror makes beauty visible.
The beggar makes mercy visible.

That is why God said
in Surat al-Ḍuḥa,
Do not drive away the beggar.

The beggar is the mirror of divine giving.
Be careful.
Even a harsh breath
can cloud the mirror's face.

Sometimes generosity awakens need,
so the beggar appears and asks.
Sometimes it gives before any asking,
pouring out more than was needed.

So the beggars
are the mirror of God's bounty,
and those who are with God
are joined to Absolute Bounty itself.

Outside these two,
what remains is lifeless—
not present at this door,
only an image stitched on a curtain.

False Hunger

There is a difference
between one who is poor for God,
hungry for Him,

and one who is poor of God,
empty of Him,
and thirsty for what is not He.

The second is only a picture of a dervish.
He is not worthy of this bread.
Do not throw bread

before the painted image of a dog.

He wants a morsel.
He does not want God.
Do not spread a table
before a lifeless picture.

The dervish who wants only bread
is a fish of dry land,
shaped like a fish,
yet fleeing the sea.

He is a barnyard bird,
not the Simurgh of the open sky.
He swallows sweet bites,
but he does not feed from God.

He claims to love God
for the sake of gain.
His soul is not in love
with Beauty,
with Excellence itself.

And if he imagines
that he loves the Divine Essence,
what he grasps is only an idea,
a thought of Names and
Attributes,
not the Essence.

Every concept is born
from qualities and definitions.
But God is not born.
He is lam yalid—
"He begets not."

How can one enamored
of his own imagination
be counted among the lovers
of the Lord of all bounty?

Yet if one loves even that shadow
sincerely,
the metaphor may still
lead him to the Real.

To unfold this fully
would need a long commentary,
and many minds are too frail for it.

Weak and short-sighted minds
breed a hundred crooked thoughts.
Not every bird can eat the fig.

Least of all
a dead and rotting bird,
blind, eyeless,
swollen with fantasy.

Painted Joy

What does a painted fish know
of sea or shore?
What does colour know
of soap or black vitriol?

If you draw a sorrowing face on paper,
it learns nothing of sorrow or joy.

It may look grief-stricken,
yet feel no grief.
It may appear smiling,
yet know no gladness.

So too,
the joys and sorrows
drawn in the worldly heart
are only a picture
beside the true joy
and the true sorrow of the spirit.

The painted smile exists for your sake,
so that through the image
you may come to know the reality.

The forms you see
in this bathhouse of the world,
viewed from outside
the dressing-room of self-surrender,
are only garments.

As long as you remain outside,
you see only clothes.
Take off your clothes,
enter in,
dear kindred soul.

With clothes on,
there is no way inside.

The body does not know the soul.
The garment does not know the body.

Grace At The Palace Gate

(Verses 2773–2814)

Summary

The Bedouin comes to the Caliph's court hoping for money, carrying a humble gift of water and the simple desire to receive bread, favour, and reward. But as soon as he enters the atmosphere of true majesty, his purpose changes. Outwardly, he is speaking to palace officers, yet inwardly the poem turns toward the soul's meeting with Divine generosity. What begins as need becomes vision. What begins as bargaining becomes intoxication.

Rumi then opens the deeper teaching through a stream of examples: Moses seeking fire and finding God's Fire, the seeker of bread meeting beauty, the hunter of gain stumbling into eternal life. This is the great Sufi turning, where worldly motives are not praised, yet can become the first thread by which mercy

draws a person upward. The passage then warns against loving only fragments of reality, the passing forms of the world, instead of the Whole, which is God. To cling to created things as if they were self-sufficient is to love sunlight on a wall and forget the sun. The prophets come to reconnect the part with the Whole, and the lover is called beyond temporary beauty into abiding union.

Verses of the Poem

At The Threshold

When the desert Arab came,
from far-off wastes,
to the Caliph's gate,

the chamberlains came out to meet
him,
and with such courtesy
it was as though they scattered
rose-water
over his heart.

Before he spoke,
they understood his need.
Their custom was this,
to give
before anyone asked.

They said,
"O chief of the Arabs,
from where have you come?
How has the road treated you,
with all its weariness?"

He answered,

"I am a chief,
if your favor falls on me.
Without your regard,
I am no one.

O you whose faces bear
the signs of honour,
whose brightness is lovelier
than gold itself.

O you,
one glance at whom
is worth a hundred sights.
At your appearing,
gold is scattered in joy.

O you whose seeing
is lit by the Light of God,
who have come from God
to give with open hands,

so that by one look
you may cast your elixir
upon the copper
of human souls.

I am a stranger.
I have come from the desert.
I came hoping
for the Sultan's grace.

The fragrance of his generosity
has covered even the wilderness.
The very grains of sand
seemed to come alive through it.

I came this whole long way
for dinars.
But once I arrived,
I became drunk
on the vision alone."

What We Seek, What We Find

A man runs to the baker
to buy bread,
then loses himself
in the baker's beauty.

Another enters a rose-garden
looking for delight,
and finds it instead
in the face of the gardener.

Like the desert-dweller
who drew water from a well,
yet from Joseph's radiant face
tasted the Water of Life.

Moses went
to bring back fire,
but he saw such a Fire
at the holy bush
that fire itself
was forgotten.

Jesus rose up
to flee his enemies,
and that rising
lifted him
to the Fourth Heaven.

The ear of wheat
became Adam's trial,
yet from that same wheat
the whole human line unfolded.

The falcon comes to a snare
for a scrap of food,
and there it finds
the King's own wrist,
fortune,
and honour.

A child goes to school

for the sake of a promised bird,
a small pretty prize from his father.
Yet through that schooling
the child rises high,
pays his dues,
and comes to knowledge.

Abbas came to battle
for revenge,
to oppose Ahmad,
the Prophet,
and resist the true religion.

Yet he and his descendants
became the Caliphate's support,
a sheltering front and back
for the faith,
until the Day of Resurrection.

So I too came
to this court for wealth.
But once I stepped beneath its
porch,
I became inwardly rich,
a chief in spirit.

I brought water as a gift,
hoping for bread.
Yet hope for bread
led me
to the highest garden of Paradise.

Bread drove one Adam
out of Paradise.
Bread has brought me
into the company
of those who belong there.

Now, like the angels,
I am loosened
from water and bread,
from the pull of mere material
need.
With no worldly object left to
chase,
I circle this court
like the revolving heavens.

In all this world,
nothing moves without some aim,
except the bodies
and souls
of God's lovers.

The Wall And The Sun

The lover of this world
is like one
who falls in love with a wall
because sunlight rests on it.

He does not labour
to understand
that the radiance
does not come from the wall,

but from the sun itself,
high in the fourth heaven.

So he gives his whole heart
to the wall.
Then, when the sunlight
withdraws
and returns to the sun,
he is left desolate,
cut off
from what he desired.

Those who love the Whole
are not the ones
who cling to a fragment.
Whoever longed only for the part,
missed the Whole.

When one fragment
falls in love with another,
that beloved fragment
soon returns
to its own source.

Then the lover becomes
a laughingstock,
the captive of another's slave,
like a drowning man
clutching one as helpless as himself.

That loved one has no true power.

How could such a one care for
him?
Must the slave serve
his own master,
or someone else's craving?

That is why the proverb says:
if you must risk yourself in love,
let it be with one who is free;
if you must steal,
steal a pearl.

The meaning is this:
do not spend your soul
on what is itself bound.
Do not gamble eternity
on what cannot remain.

The slave returns
to his master.
The lover is left
in grief.

The rose's scent
goes back to the rose,
and he is left
with the thorn.

Far from what he wanted,
his labor wasted,
his effort barren,
his foot wounded,

he is like a hunter
trying to capture a shadow.

How can a shadow
ever become his possession?

He clutches hard
at the shadow of a bird,
while the bird itself,
safe on the branch,
looks on in astonishment,

as if to say,
"What kind of bewildered fool is
this,
laughing over such decay,
calling this ruin
a cause?"

And if you say,
"But the part is joined to the
whole,"
then go on,
eat thorns,
for the thorn too
is joined to the rose.

Yet except in one limited sense,
the part is not truly joined
to the Whole.
Otherwise,
the mission of the prophets
would be pointless.

The prophets came
to join what is cut off
to its source.
If all were already one
in realized union,
what work would remain
for prophecy?

This speech has no end.
O dear one,
the day is fading.
Let the tale come to rest.

The Pitcher at the Bank

(Verses 2815–2852)

Summary

The passage begins with the Bedouin's humble gift, a simple jug of rainwater offered to the Caliph. What seems small and almost laughable becomes a mirror for a larger truth: every outward act reflects its inward source. Rumi turns from the court to the soul, showing how rulers shape their people, teachers shape their students, and spiritual masters shape the hearts entrusted to them. The deepest knowledge, he says, is not pride in learning, but poverty before God, faqr, the emptied state that can receive Divine fullness.

Then the poem shifts into the story of the grammarian and the boatman. The learned man boasts of his formal knowledge, but when the boat begins to sink, another kind of knowing is needed. Here Rumi contrasts nahw—

grammar—with mahw—self-effacement, the dissolving of ego before the Divine Sea. The jug becomes the symbol of limited human knowledge, while the Caliph, and beyond him God, is the vast river itself. The real invitation is to stop clinging to the jug and surrender to the living water.

Verses of the Poem

The Humble Offering

He brought the jug of water,
and with it
planted a seed of devotion
in the Caliph's court.

"Carry this gift," he said,
"to the Sultan.
Let the seeker at the King's door
be freed from poverty.

"It is sweet water,
and this green jug is new.
It is rainwater,
gathered in our poor ditch."

The royal attendants smiled,
yet they received it
as though it were life itself.

For the kindness
of a wise and generous king
had left its mark
on every heart around him.

The nature of kings
settles into their people,
just as the green sky
makes the earth grow green.

See the king
as a great reservoir,
with channels running out
in every direction,

and water pouring through them
like streams from a mill.

When the source is pure,
every channel
brings sweet water,
pleasant to drink.

But if the reservoir is bitter,
muddy, corrupted,
then every pipe
reveals the same.

For each one
is joined to the source.
Go down deep,
deep into this meaning.

The Hidden Source

See how the grace
of the houseless Spirit
spreads its influence
through the whole body.

See how the noble nature of
Reason
brings the whole body
into order
and discipline.

See how Love,
wild, untamed,
restless and bold,
throws the whole body
into holy bewilderment.

When the sea is pure
like Kawthar,
even its pebbles
become pearls and jewels.

Whatever knowledge
the master carries,
the pupils' souls
take on that colour.

With the theologian,
the eager student
learns theology.

With the jurist,
the student learns law,
not theology,
when the lesson is opened.

With the grammarian,
the pupil's soul
is shaped by grammar.

But with the master
immersed in the Way,
the disciple's soul
is drawn into the King,
into God.

And of every kind of knowledge,
the best provision
for the road of death
is the knowledge of spiritual
poverty,
faqr,
the emptied self
that needs only God.

The Boat And The Sea

A grammarian once
boarded a boat.

That proud man
turned to the boatman
and said,
"Have you ever studied grammar?"

"No,"
the boatman answered.

The grammarian said,
"Then half your life
has gone to waste."

The boatman's heart grew heavy,
but for the moment
he said nothing.

Then a fierce wind
threw the boat
into a whirlpool.

The boatman shouted,
"Tell me,
do you know how to swim?"

"No," said the grammarian,
"O gracious and well-spoken man."

The boatman replied,
"O grammarian,
now your whole life
is lost,
for the boat is sinking
in these whirlpools."

Here, what is needed
is not grammar,
nahw,
but self-effacement,
mahw.

If you have become
effaced,
if you have died to self,
then you may plunge into the sea
without fear.

The sea lifts the dead one
to its surface.
But the one still clinging to life,
how will he escape?

When you have died
to the qualities of the flesh,
the Sea of Divine knowing
will raise you
upon its own head.

But you
who called others asses,
see how now
you are left floundering
like an ass on ice.

Even if you are
the greatest scholar alive,
look well
at how this world
and this moment
pass away.

We told the tale
of the grammarian
so that you might learn
the grammar
of self-loss.

In losing yourself,
dear friend,
you will find
the fiqh of fiqh,
the deep law within law,
the grammar of grammar,
the root of every discipline.

That jug of water
is like our many forms
of knowledge.

And the Caliph
is the Tigris
of God's knowing.

We carry our little jugs
to the Tigris.

If we do not know
that we are donkeys,
then donkeys
we truly are.

Still, the Bedouin
could be excused.
He did not know
the Tigris,
he had never seen
that mighty river.

But if he had known it,
as we claim to know it,
he would never have carried
that jug
from place to place.

No, if he had truly known
the Tigris,
he would have smashed
that jug
against a stone.

Thirst at the Torrent's Edge

(Verses 2853–2901)

Summary

The poor Arab who brought a humble jug of water to the Caliph is overwhelmed when he sees the Tigris. His small gift suddenly appears almost laughable beside the river's abundance, yet the King accepted it with generosity and returned it with gold. In this movement, Rumi turns the story inward: the Arab is the human being, the jug is the self with its little offering, and the King is the Divine Giver whose mercy far exceeds what we bring.

The poem then widens into teaching. All creation is a vessel filled with traces of Divine wisdom and beauty, drawn from the overflowing river of God's hidden treasure. When a person glimpses that river, the hard shell of selfhood begins to break. What seems like loss is really a deeper wholeness. Hunger, discipline, and

inward purification weaken the animal self so the seeker can walk the path of the saints.

Now the teaching becomes more intimate. The lover of God carries the fragrance of Love in every word, even when outward speech appears strange, doubtful, or rough. Form is not the final truth. What matters is essence, intention, and the inward orientation toward God. In the end, Rumi says this is not merely a tale from long ago, but a living state: we ourselves are the needy Arab, the fragile jug, and the King's generosity meeting us now.

Verses of the Poem

The King's Kindness

When the Caliph saw the gift,
and heard the Arab's story,

he filled the jug with gold,
and added other gifts besides.

He lifted the Arab
out of poverty,

and clothed him
in robes of honour.

He said,
"Place this jug of gold in his hands.

When he sets out for home,
take him to the Tigris.

He came through desert
and hard land-travel.

Let him return by water,
for that way is nearer."

Shame At The River

When the Arab boarded the boat,
and his eyes fell on the Tigris,

he bowed low in shame,
again and again,

falling into prostration,
his head bent down.

He said,
"Oh, how astonishing,
the kindness of that generous King.

More astonishing still,
that he accepted this water from
me.

How did that sea of giving
so quickly receive

such a counterfeit coin
from my hand?"

Every Vessel Overflows

Know, dear one,
that everything in this universe

is a jug,
filled to the brim

with wisdom
and beauty.

Each thing is only a drop
from the Tigris of His beauty,

a beauty so overflowing
it cannot be contained
beneath the skin.

It was a hidden treasure.
From the force of its fullness,
it broke into manifestation,

and made the earth
shine brighter than the heavens.

It was a hidden treasure.
From the pressure of its
abundance,
it surged forth,

and dressed the earth
like a sultan
robed in satin.

And if the Arab
had seen even one branch
of the Divine Tigris,

he would have smashed that jug,
smashed it completely.

Those who have seen it
do not remain self-possessed.

Like the one beside himself,
they hurl stones
at the jug
of their separate selfhood.

O you who, out of jealousy,
have thrown a stone
at the jug,

the jug only grows more complete
through being shattered.

The jar is broken,
yet the water is not spilled.

From this breaking
a hundred wholenesses arise.

Every shard of the jug
is dancing in ecstasy,

though to partial reason,
to the reasoning mind that divides,
this seems absurd.

In that state,
neither jug appears,
nor water.

Reflect deeply.
God knows best
what is true.

Hunger And The Road

When you knock
at the door of Reality,
it will open.

Strike the wing
of thought,

so you may become
a royal falcon.

The wing of your thought
has grown mud-heavy,

because you are a clay-eater,
because clay has become
your bread.

Bread and meat
begin in clay.

Eat less of them,
so you do not remain
earthbound,
like clay itself.

When hunger comes,
you turn into a dog,

harsh, snapping,
ill-tempered,
coarse in nature.

When you are stuffed full,
you become a carcass,

without understanding,
without movement,

like a wall.

So now you are a corpse,

now a dog.

How will such a one
run well
on the road of lions,
the road of the saints?

Know this,
your only hunting tool
is that dog,
the animal soul.

Throw it bones,
but not too often.

For when the dog
has eaten its fill,
it rebels.

How then will it run
after the noble hunt?

It was hunger
that led the Arab
to that exalted court,

and there
he found his fortune.

In the story already told,
we spoke of the King's kindness
to that poor man
who had no refuge.

The Scent Of Love

Whatever the lover of God says,
the fragrance of Love
rises from his mouth

into Love's own dwelling.

If he speaks theology,
it becomes poverty,
holy need before God.

From such a sweet-speaking one,
the scent of faqr rises,
the scent of spiritual poverty.

And if he speaks unbelief,
it still carries
the fragrance of true religion.

If he speaks in doubt,
his doubt turns
into certainty.

Even the crooked froth
that has risen
from a sea of sincerity,

that clouded foam
comes
from a pure source.

Know that even its froth
is pure and worthy,

like harsh words
from the lips of the Beloved.

Those unasked reproaches
become sweet to the lover,

for the sake of the Beloved's face,
for the radiance
he longs to behold.

If the lover of God
speaks falsehood,
it appears as truth.

O beautiful falsehood,
that could even adorn
the truth itself.

If you shape sugar
into the form of a loaf,

while you taste it,
it will be sweetness,
not bread.

If a true believer
finds an idol
made of gold,

how could he leave it there
for the idol-worshipper's sake?

No.

He takes it,
throws it into the fire,

and breaks
that borrowed form,

so the idol-shape
does not remain
stamped upon the gold.

For form blocks the way,
and lies in ambush
for those who seek Reality.

The gold's true substance
belongs to lordship,
to a noble essence.

The idol-mark
pressed upon pure gold
is only borrowed,
not real.

Do not burn a blanket
for the sake of a flea.

Do not lose the whole day
for every gnat's complaint.

You are an idol-worshipper
as long as you stay trapped
in forms.

Leave the form.
Look toward the reality.

Beyond Color

If you are truly bound
for the Pilgrimage,

seek a fellow pilgrim
to travel with,

whether Hindu,
Turkoman,
or Arab.

Do not look
at his shape
or color.

Look at his purpose,
look at his intention.

If he is black
yet inwardly in harmony with you,

call him white,
for in spirit
his complexion is your own.

This tale has been told
upside down and scattered,

like the ways of lovers,
without beginning
or end.

It has no beginning,
because it was
before pre-eternity.

It has no ending,
because it is kin
to everlastingness.

No, it is like water.

Every drop of it
is both beginning and end,

and at the same time
beyond both.

This is not a story,
understand.
God forbid.

This is the ready coin
of my state

and yours,
present now.

Reflect on it well.

For the Sufi,
in spiritual vision,
is vast and luminous.

What is past
does not remain
in his mind.

We are the Arab,
and the jug,
and the King.

We are all of them.

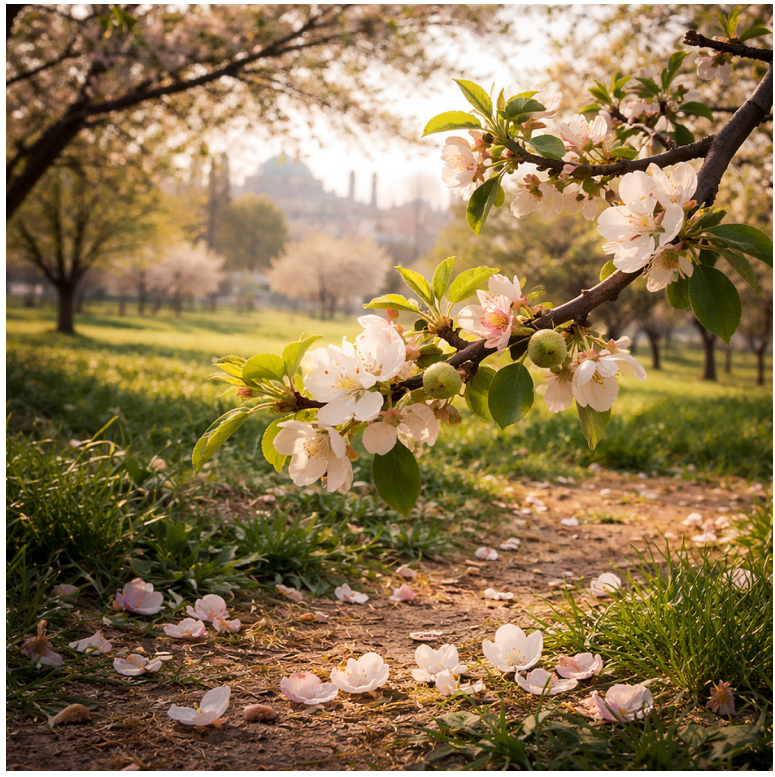
And the one
turned away from this Truth,
will remain turned away.

When Spring Reveals The Heart

(Verses 2902–2933)

Summary

Rumi is speaking as a spiritual guide, teaching the listener how Reason, lit by Divine truth, is opposed by greed and craving, which resist the light. He leads us from the question of the One and the many into a deeper teaching: all beings appear separate, yet they belong to a greater wholeness. What looks divided in the world is held together in a higher unity.



The passage then turns toward unveiling. Resurrection becomes the day when inner realities are shown plainly. The thorn fears spring because spring reveals what it is; the rose welcomes spring because beauty does not fear

disclosure. Autumn can hide differences, but the Divine Gardener still sees clearly. This is a lesson in sincerity before God.

At the close, blossom and fruit become the central image. Outer form gives way so inner reality may appear. The body breaks, and spirit rises. What is crushed, broken, or shed is not lost; in the Sufi path, it is often the very condition for ripening, transformation, and the soul's awakening to what is real.

Verses of the Poem

The Hidden Division

Know this.
The husband is Reason,
and the wife is greed,
and grasping desire.

These two move in darkness.
They resist the light.
But Reason
is the shining candle.

Now listen
to where this denial begins.
It rises from this:
the Whole appears
in many parts.

The Whole And Its Parts

Yet the parts of the Whole
are not parts
in the ordinary way.
They are not like fragrance
belonging to a rose.

The beauty in every green field
belongs to the Rose.
The mourning dove's low call
belongs
to that Nightingale.

If I become tangled
in every hard question
and every answer,
how will I bring water
to the thirsty?

When you are trapped
in bewilderment
and pressed on every side,
be patient.
Patience
is the key to joy.

Leave off restless thoughts.

Leave them.
Thought is like a lion,
like a wild ass,
and the heart
is their thicket.

The Medicine Of Restraint

Restraint is better
than medicine.
To keep scratching
only deepens the itch.

Truly, restraint
is the first root
of healing.
Practice it,
and see
how the spirit grows strong.

Receive these words
as the ear receives sound,
so I may make for you
a golden earring.

Then you will become
a ring in the ear
of the Moon,
the one who shapes gold.
You will rise
to the moon
and to the Pleiades.

First understand this:
created beings are different
in their inward reality,
from ya to alif,
from end to beginning.

Among the letters
there is confusion,
difference,
uncertainty.
And yet, in another way,
they are one,
through and through.

From one side
they oppose each other.
From another,
they are united.
From one side,
they are play.
From another,
they are truth.

The Day Of Unveiling

That is why Resurrection
is the day
of the greatest inspection.
Only one
with real splendor
welcomes such seeing.

But for the false one,

for the counterfeit soul,
the day of inspection
is exposure.

Since he has no face
bright as the sun,
he wants only night,
a veil
to cover him.

Because his thorn
has not even one rose-petal,
Spring
is the enemy
of his conscience.

But for the one
who is roses and lilies
through and through,
Spring is welcome
like two bright eyes.

The barren thorn
longs for autumn,
longs for autumn,
so it may compete
with the rose-garden.

It wants autumn
to hide the beauty
of the rose,
and the shame
of the thorn,
so you will not see
the color of one
or the color of the other.

So autumn becomes
its spring,
its life.
Then worthless stone
and pure ruby
seem the same.

The Gardener Knows

But the Gardener knows
the difference,
even in autumn.
And the sight of the One
is better
than the sight of the world.

That One Person
is, in truth,
the whole world.
He does not dwell
in evil as evil.
The stars, every one,
are parts
of the moon.

So every lovely form
in this world cries out,
"Good news,

good news,
Spring is here."

While the blossom gleams
like shining armor,
how could the fruit
show its swelling form?

When the blossom falls,
the fruit comes forward.
When the body is broken,
the spirit
lifts its head.

The fruit is the reality.
The blossom
is its form.

The blossom
announces the gift.
The fruit
is the gift itself.

When the blossom fell away,
the fruit became visible.
When one diminished,
the other began to grow.

How can bread
give strength
until it is broken?

How can a cluster of grapes
pour out wine
until it is crushed?

Unless the myrobalan
is pounded
and mixed with medicine,
how can the medicine
become healing

The Unfettered King

(Verses 2981–3012)

Summary

First, Rumi tells a humorous story: a man wants the image of a lion tattooed on his shoulder, but he cannot bear the pain of having any part of it applied. He asks for the tail to be removed, then the ears, then the belly, until the lion becomes impossible. The joke is gentle, but the teaching is sharp. The man wants the glory of the lion without enduring the needle.

Then the poem turns inward. Rumi addresses the seeker directly: if you want freedom from the nafs, the lower self that resists God, you must accept the wound that heals. Spiritual transformation is not decoration. It is the painful undoing of ego, pride, and self-importance. This is how one learns tawḥid, the

oneness of God—not as an idea only, but by being inwardly dissolved before the One.

The passage moves from comedy to unveiling. The true saints have passed beyond self-existence, and even the elements serve them. To glorify God is to become dust before Him. To shine like daylight, one must know the dark.

Verses of the Poem

The Needle Begins

Hear this story,
from the people of Qazwin,
and the way they were known.

They marked their bodies with
blue,
needle on skin,
hand and shoulder,
thinking no harm would come of
it.

One man from Qazwin
went to a tattooer and said,
"Adorn me well.
Make it beautiful."

The barber asked,
"What image shall I give you?"

He said,
"A fierce lion.
My star is Leo.
Give me a lion's form.
Use plenty of blue."

He asked,
"Where shall I place it?"

The man said,
"On my shoulder."

The needle entered,
and at once
the pain settled there.

The brave man began to groan.

"O master," he cried,
"You have killed me.
What are you making?"

He said,
"A lion,
as you asked."

Then the man said,
"Which part of the lion
did you begin with?"

He answered,
"The tail."

The man cried out,
"Dear friend,
leave out the tail.

This lion's tail and hindquarters
have stolen my breath.
My chest is tight from it.

Let the lion have no tail,
O maker of lions.
My heart is weak
before the needle's blows."

Piece By Piece

The barber began again,
in another place,
steady,
unsparing.

Again the man shouted,
"What part is this now?"

The barber said,
"This is the ear."

He answered,
"Doctor,
let him have no ears.
Leave the ears out.
Shorten the work."

Again the barber moved
to another spot,
and again the man wailed.

"What part is this
on the third place?"

The barber said,
"This is the lion's belly,
my good sir."

He answered,
"Let the lion have no belly.
What use is a belly
for a painted lion
already full?"

Then the barber stood bewildered,
stunned,
his fingers at his mouth,
lost in amazement.

At last he threw down the needle
and said,

"Has anyone in this world
ever seen such a thing?

Who has ever seen
a lion
with no tail,
no ears,
no belly?

God Himself
did not make such a lion."

The Deeper Wound

Brother,
bear the pain of the lancet,
so you may be freed
from the poison
of the rebellious self,
the nafs.

The sky,
the sun,
the moon,
all bow down
before those
who have escaped
the prison of selfhood.

Whoever has died
to that corrupting self,
even sun and cloud
move in obedience to him.

When the heart has learned
to kindle the candle
of knowing and love,
the sun itself
cannot scorch him.

Did not God speak
of the rising sun
turning away
from the people of the cave?

To the one journeying
from the particular
toward the Universal,
even the thorn
becomes lovely
as a rose.

What is it
to glorify God?

To see yourself
as dust,
lowly,
nothing in yourself.

What is it
to know
the unity of God,
tawhid?

To let yourself be consumed
in the presence
of the One.

Burn Through

If you want
to shine like day,
burn away
your night-like self.

Melt your separate existence,
as copper melts
in the alchemist's elixir,
into the Being
of the One
who gives all being.

You have clenched both hands
around "I"
and "we."

All this inner wreckage
comes from division,
from seeing two
where there is only One.

The Smile Before Judgment

(Verses 3013–3055)

Summary

The story begins as a parable of spiritual rank, hidden pride, and the danger of standing before majesty while still clinging to the self. The lion represents the sovereign of truth—the saint, the realized guide, or in a deeper sense, the overwhelming presence of Divine authority. The wolf and fox travel with him and benefit from his strength, yet inwardly they begin to imagine a fairness based on their own separate claims. That secret presumption is already a fall.

The poem turns on one decisive test: how the prey is divided. The wolf still speaks from ego, measuring worth by size and assigning shares as though he exists independently beside the lion. For that, he is destroyed. Rumi's deeper teaching is about fana—the passing away of self in the presence of God. Before true

majesty, "I" and "mine" cannot remain. The lion's judgment is severe, but it is also mercy: a cutting away of the illusion that separates the creature from the Real.

Verses of the Poem

Into The Hunt

The lion,
the wolf,
and the fox
went out to hunt in the mountains,

so that by helping one another
they might bind the prey
more surely.

Together,
the three of them
could seize
great spoil
in that deep wild place.

Though the lion,
fierce and sovereign,
had no need of them,
he still gave them honour,
and let them travel beside him.

A king like this
is burdened by attendants,
yet he walks with them.

Union itself
is a mercy from God.

The moon loses nothing
by appearing among the stars.
It does so
out of generosity.

So too,
the Prophet was told,
"Consult them,"
though no counsel
could equal his own.

Barley may lie
in the scale with gold,
yet barley
does not become gold.

For a while,
the spirit travels
with the body,
and the dog
guards the palace gate.

So that hunting party
went on through the mountains,
the lion majestic,
the others at his side.

They found
a wild ox,
a goat,
and a plump hare.

Their hunt prospered.

Whoever walks
behind one
who is truly lion-hearted in battle,
will not lack
roasted meat,
day or night.

Hidden Thoughts

When they dragged the prey
back from the mountain
to the jungle,

bloody,
slain,
and torn,

the wolf and the fox
began to hope.

They hoped
the sharing would be done
by the justice of kings.

That hope rose in them,
and its reflection
reached the lion.

He knew
what lay beneath it.

The lion who is master
of outward strength
and inward mystery
knows
what passes through the
conscience.

Guard yourself,
O heart that thinks.
Do not let an evil thought
form itself
before such a one.

He knows,
and still rides on
in silence.

He smiles in your face
while hiding
what he has seen.

When the lion saw

their inward corruption,
he did not speak of it.

He remained outwardly gracious,
but said within himself,

"I will show you
what fits your state,
you miserable beggars.

Was my judgment
not enough for you?
Was my generosity
so small in your eyes?

You whose understanding
came from my understanding,
you whose little wisdom
was lit
by my gifts—

what should an image think
of the painter,
except good,

when the painter
gave it thought
and form?

Yet you have thought ill of me,
you disgrace of the world.

I will cut down
the false heads
of those who think badly of God.

I will cleanse Time itself
of your dishonor,
so that this tale
may remain
as a warning."

Even while he turned this over
within himself,
the lion kept smiling.

Do not trust
the smile of the lion.

Worldly wealth
is like one of God's smiles.
It makes people drunk,
boastful,
and stripped
of what truly saves.

Better for you
is poverty
and hardship,

for then
that smile
will no longer deceive you.

The Trial Of Division

Then the lion said,

"O wolf,
come forward.
Divide the prey.

Old wolf,
make justice new.
Show us now
what substance you are made of.

Act as my deputy
in the giving out."

The wolf said,

"O King,
the wild ox is yours,
for it is great,
and you are great—

strong,
powerful,
swift.

The goat is mine,
for it stands in the middle.

And the hare
belongs to the fox.
That is the proper division."

The lion said,

"O wolf,
what is this you have said?

When I am here,
how do you speak
of 'mine'
and 'yours'?

What a dog the wolf must be,
that in the presence
of a lion like me,
without equal,
he still sees himself."

Then he said,

"Come here,
you donkey
swollen with self-regard."

The wolf came near.

The lion seized him
with his claws
and tore him apart.

Because he found in him
no kernel
of right conduct,

he stripped the skin
from his head
as punishment.

Passing Away

The lion said,

"If the sight of me
did not carry you
out of yourself,

then such a spirit
deserves
a wretched death.

Since you did not fade
from yourself
in my presence,
it was mercy
to strike off your head."

Everything passes away
except His Face.
Unless you dwell
in that Divine Reality,
do not seek
a lasting existence.

But whoever has passed
out of self
into that Face,
the decree of perishing
does not apply to him.

He has entered
the realm of "except"
and crossed beyond
mere nonbeing.

Whoever stands
at the door
of the Divine Court
still saying
"I"
and "we,"

is turned back
from that door
and left
with nothing.

When Only Thou Remainest

(Verses 3056–3122)

Summary

A seeker comes to the house of the Beloved and is turned away, not because he is hated, but because he is still full of himself. His year of separation becomes a furnace. Longing cooks what pride could not soften. When he returns, he no longer says "I" as an isolated self. He says, in effect, "Only Thou art here." That is the threshold of union. The friend's house is the chamber of Divine intimacy, where the divided self cannot enter.

From there, the teaching widens. Rumi moves from the parable of the door into the deeper mystery of tawhid, the oneness of God, where all apparent twoness is refined into one reality. Even the command Kun—"Be"—appears as two letters outwardly, yet inwardly it is one act. The lion and the wolf then show

what happens when ego remains alive before majesty, while the fox is saved because he learns through humility and warning. The whole passage calls the soul to die to self, to become single, and to awaken before mercy turns into judgment.

Verses of the Poem

At The Door

A man came,
and knocked at his friend's door.

From within, the friend asked,
"Who is there,
faithful one?"

He said,
"It is I."

The friend replied,
"Go back.
This is not yet your hour.

At a table like this,
there is no place
for one still unripe."

Who but the fire
of absence
and separation
can cook what is raw?

Who but that fire
can free a person
from the hidden stain
of hypocrisy?

So the poor man went away.

For a year,
he wandered in longing,
far from his friend,

and the sparks of separation
burned him through.

The Returning

At last,
that one who had been burned
was cooked.

He came back again,
and paced in reverence
before his companion's house.

He knocked at the door
with a hundred fears,
with a hundred courtesies,

afraid lest even one careless word
might slip from his lips.

His friend called out,
"Who is at the door?"

He answered,
"At the door,
it is Thou,
O heart-enchanter."

Then the friend said,
"Now you may enter.

Since you are I,
come in,
O my own self.

There is no room in this house
for two I's."

A thread with two loose ends
does not pass
through the needle's eye.

Become one strand,
and enter
this needle.

Fineness Of Union

The thread belongs
with the needle.

But the eye of the needle
is no place
for a camel.

How can the camel of selfhood,
this heavy bodily existence,
be made fine enough,

unless the shears
of spiritual discipline
and righteous effort
cut it down?

Yet even that,
dear reader,
needs the hand of God.

For His command is Be,
and it is.

He brings into being
all that seems impossible.

By His hand,
the impossible becomes possible.

By awe of Him,
the rebellious grow still.

Did He not heal

the one born blind,
the leper?

Does He not make
the dead live again
by the power of the Almighty?

And even nonbeing,
deader than the dead,
must answer
when He calls it forth.

Recite the word:
Every day He is upon some task.

Do not imagine Him idle.
Do not think Him still.

At the very least,
each day
He sends out three armies.

One army
from the loins of fathers
to the mothers,

so the plant of life
may begin
in the womb.

One army
from the wombs
to the earth,

so the world
may be filled
with women and men.

One army
from the earth
into what lies beyond death,

so each soul may behold
the beauty
of its deeds.

But this speech
has no end.

Come,
let us return
to those two true friends.

Only One

The friend said,
"Come in,

you who are now
entirely myself,

not divided
like rose and thorn
in the garden."

The thread
has become one.

Do not be confused
because the letters
K and N
appear as two.

Kun — Be —
is spoken in two letters,

yet those two
draw existence
from non-existence

like a doubled cord
casting a noose
into the unseen.

So in the world of forms,
the rope may seem double,

though in its effect
it is one.

Whether feet are two
or four,
they travel one road.

Like the two blades
of shears,
they make one cut.

Look at two washermen.

Outwardly,
they seem opposed.

One throws the cotton garments
into the water.

The other
lays them out to dry.

Then again
the first wets
what the second dried.

It seems
they are undoing one another.

Yet these two apparent opposites
work with one intention,
in harmony.

So too
every prophet
and every saint
has a path,

a practice,
a way of guidance,

but all of it

leads to God.

In truth,
the paths are one.

Beyond Speech

When the listener's attention
fell asleep,
the water carried off the millstones.

The current of that water
runs above the mill.

Its entering the mill
is only for your sake.

When there is no more need
for the turning of the mill,

the saint,
or the prophet,
lets the water return
to its original stream.

The Universal Spirit,
the Logos,
comes to the mouth
only to teach.

Otherwise,
speech has another channel
altogether.

It moves
without sound,
without repeated syllables,

toward rose gardens
beneath which rivers flow.

O God,
show the soul
that place

where speech is growing
without letters.

So the pure soul
may turn its head into a foot,
and rush headlong

into the vast expanse
of non-being—

not mere emptiness,
but that spacious unseen
from which this fleeting world
of image and existence
is nourished.

The realm of imagination
is narrower
than that hidden no-thingness,

and because it is narrow,
it becomes a place of pain.

What we call existence
is narrower still
than imagination,

and so moons here
wane and diminish.

Narrower still
is the world
of color and the senses—

a prison,
tight and confining.

Narrowness comes
from mixture,
from multiplicity,
from all that is compounded.

The senses move
among fragments.

But the world of Unity
lies beyond the senses.

If you seek Oneness,
walk there.

The Divine command,
Be,
is one single act.

The K and the N
appear only in speech.

Its inward meaning
is pure,
simple,
undivided.

But this discourse
has no end.

Return now,
that we may see
what became of the wolf
before the lion.

The Wolf And The Lion

The lion,
angered by the wolf's disrespect
in dividing the prey,

tore off the wolf's head,

so that doubleness,
self-assertion,
and separation
might not remain.

This was vengeance

upon the old wolf,

because he had not died
to himself
before the Amir,
the sovereign presence.

Then the lion turned
to the fox
and said,

"Now divide the prey
for breakfast."

The fox bowed low,
and said,

"This fat ox
is for Your Majesty's breakfast.

This goat
shall be kept
for the King's midday meal.

And this hare
for supper,
at evening,

for the gracious
and generous King."

The lion said,

"O fox,
you have made justice shine.

From whom did you learn
to divide so well?"

The fox replied,
"O King of the world,
I learned it
from the fate of the wolf."

Warning Becomes Wisdom

The lion said,
"Since you have bound yourself
to love of me,

take all three,
and go.

Fox,
since you have become wholly
mine,
how could I harm you?

When you have become myself,
I do not strike you.

I am yours,
and all game is yours.

Set your foot
upon the Seventh Heaven,

and rise beyond.

Since you took warning
from the wretched wolf,
you are no fox.

You are my own lion."

The wise are those
who learn
from the suffering
that others refused to heed.

Then the fox said within himself,

"A hundred thanks
to the lion

for calling me
after the wolf.

If he had called me first
and told me to divide,

who could have left him alive?"

So thanks be to God
that we came into this world
after those who came before,

so we heard
how God chastised
earlier peoples,

and, like the fox,
might guard ourselves
by remembering
the fate
of those ancient wolves.

Mercy And Warning

For this reason,
the true Prophet of God,
clear in speech and faithful in truth,

called us
a community
shown mercy.

Look clearly
at the bones and fur
of those wolves,

and take warning,
you who still have strength.

The wise person
lays down
self-importance
and vanity,

having heard
what became of Pharaoh

and of Ad.

But if he will not cast it off,
then others will learn
from what overtakes him

when he too
goes astray.

The Spirit Behind the Shroud

(Verses 3123-3156)

Summary

Noah is not speaking merely as an individual prophet defending himself. He speaks as one who has died to the lower self and become a vessel for the Divine command. That is why resisting him is not simply arguing with a man, but contending with the Reality moving through him. Rumi uses the image of a lion hidden beneath a humble outer form to show that saints and prophets may appear ordinary, while carrying overwhelming spiritual force within.

The passage then turns inward. It warns against ego, appetite, and clever self-importance, calling the seeker to poverty of self before God. In that surrender, true discernment is born. The purified heart becomes a mirror, able to reflect the unseen and distinguish sincerity from hypocrisy.

From there, Rumi moves to the Sufis seated before kings. Their station is not political but spiritual: they are mirrors in which souls can see themselves. Through remembrance, meditation, and inner polishing, they recover the heart's original clarity, so that Divine beauty may be reflected there once more.

Verses of the Poem

Noah Speaks

Noah said,
O stubborn ones,
I am no longer the old self.

I have died
to the animal soul.
I live
by the Soul of souls.

Since I have died
to the senses
of Adam's children,
God has become
my hearing,
my seeing,
my knowing.

Since I am no longer "I,"
this breath is His.
Whoever dares
to answer this breath
with defiance,
stands in disbelief
before God Himself.

The Hidden Lion

In the shape of this fox,
a lion is concealed.
Do not rush forward
because the outer form
looks small.

Until you trust him
in the form you see,
you will never hear
the lion's roar
within him.

If Noah were not
the eternal Lion,
how could he have shaken
an entire world?

In one body
he held
hundreds of thousands
of lions.
He was like fire,
and the world
was like a haystack.

Because that stack
withheld what was due,
he sent flame
into it.

Whoever opens his mouth
with disrespect
before this hidden Lion,
like a wolf,
will be torn apart
by that Lion's force.

And over him
will be recited
the decree of vengeance.

He will feel the blows
of the Lion's paw,
as the wolf did.
Foolish is the one
who grows bold
before the Lion.

A Deeper Blow

If only such blows
fell on the body alone,
perhaps faith
and the heart
might remain unharmed.

But here
my strength breaks.
How can I unveil
this mystery?

Make little
of your belly,
like the fox made lean.
Do not bring
fox-tricks
into His presence.

Lay down
your whole "I"
and "we"
before Him.

The kingdom
is His kingdom.
Return the kingdom
to Him.

When you become poor
in the true way,
poor in self,
empty of claim,
then both the Lion
and what belongs
to the Lion
become yours.

He is the Holy One.
Majesty belongs to Him.

He has no need
of goodness,
no need
of kernel or shell.

Every reward,
every gift of grace,
is for the sake
of His servants.

The King desires nothing.
He made this vast dominion
for His creatures.
Happy is the one
who understands.

What use are kingdoms
to the One
who made all kingdoms,
and both worlds besides?

Before His glory,
guard your heart well.
Do not let dark thoughts
bring you to shame.

The Heart Seen Through

He sees conscience,
thought,
and inward seeking
as plainly
as a hair
seen in pure milk.

The one whose breast
has been cleared
of every image
becomes a mirror
for the unseen forms
of the Invisible.

Such a one
comes to know
the secrets within us,
without doubt,
without guesswork.

For the true believer
is the mirror
of the true believer.

When he tests
our inner poverty
on the touchstone,
he knows the difference
between faith
and uncertainty.

When his soul
has become
the touchstone of coins,
he can tell
the true gold of the heart
from the false money

of hypocrisy.

Faces Before The Saints

Kings, for this reason,
seat the knowers of God,
the Sufis,
before them,

so their own eyes
may be illumined
by looking
at those faces.

This is the way
of kings.
Surely you have heard it.

Warriors stand
to the left,
for courage
belongs to the heart,
and the heart
leans to the left side.

On the right
stand the chancellor
and the scribes,
for writing
and reckoning
belong to that hand.

But the Sufis
are placed
before the king's face,
because they are
a mirror for the soul,
and more than a mirror.

They have polished
the breast of the heart
through remembrance of God
and deep meditation,

so the heart's mirror
may receive again
the first pure image,
untouched,
virginal,
from the unseen world.

Whoever is born
with beauty
from the womb of creation,
a mirror
is set before him.

A beautiful face
loves the mirror.
Such beauty
polishes the soul,
and awakens
holy awe
in hearts.

The Glass of Poverty

(Verses 3157-3219)

Summary

A loving friend comes to Joseph, peace be upon him, and speaks of the suffering Joseph endured through betrayal, the well, and the prison. Joseph answers from the station of trust in God: affliction never stripped him of his inward dignity. From there, the poem widens into one of Rumi's great teachings: that what is broken, buried, crushed, or diminished may be undergoing transformation. Wheat becomes bread, bread becomes spirit, and spirit, when lost in Divine Love, becomes pure joy.

Then the scene turns gently toward the deeper lesson. Joseph asks for a traveller's gift, and this becomes a mirror for the soul before God: none should arrive empty-handed at the meeting with the Divine Friend. The guest's mirror

is beautiful not only as an object, but as a symbol. It opens into the central Sufi teaching here: the truest offering is not pride, fullness, or self-importance, but need, emptiness, and "non-being" before God. In that poverty, Divine Beauty is reflected.

The ending warns against the hidden poison of self-conceit. To see one's own lack is already to begin healing. Rumi turns the story into an inward reckoning: Joseph shines like prophetic beauty, while the guest models humility, and the reader is quietly asked what gift he or she is bringing to God—ego, or surrender.

Verses of the Poem

A Friend Returns

A dear friend came
from far across the world,
and entered as a guest
before Joseph,
the truthful one, peace be upon
him.

They had known one another
since childhood,
resting side by side
in the ease of old affection.

He spoke of the wrong
done by Joseph's brothers,
their envy,
their betrayal.

Joseph said,
"That was only a chain.
I was still the lion.

A lion is not brought low
by what binds his neck.
I do not accuse
the decree of God.

Even with a chain upon him,
the lion remains king
over those who forge the chain."

Then he asked,
"And in the well?
In the prison?
How was it for you?"

Joseph said,
"I was like the moon
when it grows thin
between its vanishings and return.

When the new moon bends low,
does it not, at last,
become full
in the open sky?"

Crushed Into Light

A pearl,
ground down in the mortar,
becomes medicine
for the eye and the heart,
and still it turns upward.

Wheat is buried
beneath the soil,
then rises again
as a field of grain.

Then it is crushed
in the mill,
and its worth increases,
becoming bread
that gives strength to the soul.

Then the bread is broken again
under the teeth,
and becomes thought,
understanding,
mind and spirit
in the human being.

Then, when that spirit
is lost in Love,
it becomes a joy
like the delight of sowers
after they have cast the seed.

This meaning has no end.
Come back now,
so we may hear
what that noble guest
said to Joseph.

The Gift Asked

When the guest had finished
telling his story,
Joseph said,
"Now then, my friend,
what gift have you brought me
from your journey?"

To come empty-handed
to the door of a friend
is like going to the mill
with no grain.

And God, exalted is He,
will say on the Day of Gathering,
"Where is your gift
for the Resurrection?

You have come to Us
alone,
with no provision,

just as We first created you.

Tell Me,
what offering have you brought
for the day
you were raised again?

Or did you never believe
you would return?
Did My promise
seem false to you?"

If you do not believe
you are being called
to His hospitality,
then from the kitchen
of His bounty
you will receive only dust.

But if you do believe,
why do you step
into the court
of that Friend
with empty hands?

Eat a little less.
Sleep a little less.
Bring something
for the meeting.

Be among those
who sleep only a small part
of the night,
and at dawn
ask forgiveness of God.

Move a little,
like the child in the womb,
so that you may be given
the senses
that behold the Light.

Then you will pass
out of this womb-like world,
and go from the earth
into a vast expanse.

Know that when it is said,
"God's earth is wide,"
it speaks of that wide realm
into which the saints have entered.

The heart is not constricted there.
In that open country,
the green branch
does not wither.

Now you are carrying
the burden of your senses,
growing tired,
exhausted,
ready to fall.

Yet in sleep

you are carried,
not carrying,
and so your fatigue departs,
and pain loosens its grip.

Take sleep
as only a taste,
a small sample,
of the state
in which the saints are borne.

They are like
the Companions of the Cave,
still asleep
even while rising
and turning from side to side.

God moves them
without their striving,
without their knowing,
to the right
and to the left.

What is the right hand?
Good works.

What is the left?
The needs of the body.

Both come forth
from the saints,
while they themselves
remain unaware,
like an echo.

The echo lets you hear
good or evil,
but the mountain itself
knows neither.

A Mirror Given

Then the guest said,
"I brought you a gift,
a mirror,

so that whenever
you look into it,
you may see
your own beautiful face
and remember me."

Joseph said,
"Come then,
show me what you brought."

At that,
the guest broke down,
weeping from shame.

He said,
"How many gifts
I searched for,
for your sake.

But nothing worthy
ever appeared before me.

How could I carry gold
to the mine?
How could I bring
a drop of water
to the Sea of Uman?

If I brought you
my heart and soul,
it would be like
taking cumin to Kirman,
bringing what is already there
in abundance.

There is no treasure
missing from your storehouse,
except your own beauty,
which has no equal.

So I thought it fitting
to bring you a mirror,
clear as the inward light
of a pure breast,

so that you might behold
your radiant face in it,
O you who are, like the sun,
the lamp of heaven.

I brought you a mirror,
light of my eyes,
so that when you see yourself,
you may remember me."

Then he drew the mirror out
from beneath his arm.

For the beautiful one,
the mirror is always near.

The Mirror Of Non-Being

What is the mirror
of Being?

Non-being.

Bring non-being
as your gift,
if you are not a fool.

Being is revealed
in non-being,
just as the rich
display generosity
through the poor.

The clear mirror of bread
is the hungry person.
And tinder
is the mirror of fire.

Wherever lack appears,

wherever deficiency is found,
there the excellence
of every craft
is made visible.

How could the tailor's skill
be shown
by a robe already perfect
and finely sewn?

Wood must remain uncut
for the carpenter
to reveal his art.

The physician who sets bones
goes where the leg is broken.

How would the beauty
of medicine appear
if there were no weakened patient?

How would the power
of the Elixir be known
if copper's baseness
were not plain to all?

Defect is the mirror
of perfection.
Lowliness is the mirror
of power and glory.

Each opposite
is known by its opposite.
Honey's sweetness
is tasted more sharply
beside vinegar.

Whoever sees
and truly knows
his own deficiency
has set out swiftly
toward completion.

The one who does not fly
toward the Lord of Majesty
is only held back
by imagining
he is already complete.

There is no sickness
in the soul more deadly
than this,
O proud one,
the illusion of perfection.

Much blood must flow
from the heart and the eyes
before self-satisfaction
leaves you.

Iblis fell
through the thought,
"I am better."
And that sickness

lives in every human soul.

A man may think himself
broken and humble,
but often it is only
clear water on the surface,
while filth lies hidden
beneath the stream.

When the Devil stirs him
through trial,
that water turns dark at once.

The filth was there already,
my friend,
though to your eye
the stream looked pure.

Gleam of the Eternal

(Verses 3220–3259)

Summary

Rumi first speaks of the wounded soul and the need for a true spiritual physician, the wise Pir, who can heal what the ego cannot heal within itself. Human thought, learning, and effort are not dismissed, but they are shown to be insufficient when the deeper wound is pride, self-love, and the darkness of the lower self. The image of flies on a wound becomes a powerful sign of obsessive thoughts and attachment to possessions, while the healing plaster becomes a sign of grace that descends through a realized guide.

Then the poem turns to the story of the Prophet's (PBUH) scribe, who mistook a reflected ray of Revelation for a light that originated in himself. That confusion became arrogance, then estrangement, then ruin. From there, the

teaching widens: reputation, pride, and hidden desire become invisible chains that block repentance and veil the heart from God. Yet the poem does not end in warning alone. It turns gently toward hope, urging the seeker to call on God's mercy, to see wisdom as a trust rather than a possession, and to walk the path humbly, never imagining that one has already arrived at union.

Verses of the Poem

The Hidden Wound

It is the wise Pir,
the elder who knows the Way,
who opens a channel
to drain the body's flood
and the flesh's unruly stream.

Can muddy water
wash filth away?
Can borrowed learning
drive out the ignorance
of the sensual self?

How can a sword
shape its own handle?
Go, then.
Place this wound
in the hands of a surgeon.

Flies gather
around every wound,
until no one sees
how foul it is.

Those flies
are your restless thoughts,
your love of possessions.
Your wound
is the darkness
of your inner state.

If the Pir lays a healing salve
upon that wound,
your pain quiets at once,
your crying softens,

and you imagine,
"It is healed."

But no,
the wound is not yet whole.
Only the radiance
of the plaster
has touched it.

Do not turn away

from that medicine,
you whose back is wounded.
Know where the healing comes
from.

It is a ray,
not your own nature.
Do not think
the cure rose from you.

The Reflected Ray

There was once a scribe
of the Quranic Revelation.
When the Prophet, peace be upon
him,
dictated the revealed words,
he wrote them down faithfully.

And sometimes,
a beam from that Revelation
would fall upon him,
and wisdom would stir
inside his heart.

But the root of that wisdom
was what the Prophet had spoken.
Still, that meddling fool
was deceived by a reflected gleam.

He thought,
"What the illumined Prophet says,
I too find in myself.
The truth is already in my own
breast.
Revelation comes to me as well."

The flash of his thought
turned back toward the Prophet,
and the wrath of God
fell upon his soul.

He abandoned his place as scribe.
He abandoned Islam.
He became an enemy
of Mustafa, Muhammad (PBUH),
and an enemy of the Faith.

Then Mustafa said,
"O stubborn one,
if that Light had truly been yours,
how did you become so dark?

If you were the spring
from which Revelation flows,
how could such black water
come pouring out of you?"

Yet shame for his reputation
closed his mouth.
Before people,
he could not confess.

And that is a strange sorrow,
when the heart grows darker

and darker,
until repentance itself
cannot find a way in.

He cried, "Alas."
But alas was of no use
when the sword came
and his head was taken.

The Unseen Chain

God has made reputation
like a massive weight of iron.
So many are bound
by an unseen chain.

Pride and unbelief
block the road of return,
until a person cannot even sigh.

God has spoken
of shackles raised to the chin,
forcing heads upward.
These chains
are not fastened from outside.

And He has spoken
of a barrier before them
and a barrier behind them,
and of a covering
cast over their sight.

The old sinner does not see
the wall before him
or the wall behind him.

That barrier appears
like open country.
He does not know
it is the barrier
of Divine decree.

Your earthly beloved
can stand between you
and the face of the Divine Beloved.

Your worldly guide
can stand between you
and the words
of the true guide.

How many deny the truth
while longing for religion.
But their chain is hidden,
made of reputation,
pride,
and this desire,
and that desire.

The hidden chain
is worse than iron.
An iron chain
can be split by an axe.

An iron chain

can be removed.
But who knows the cure
for the chain no eye can see?

If a wasp stings a man,
he can pull the sting
out of his flesh.

But when the wound
is made by selfhood itself,
the pain grows fierce,
and the anguish remains.

Call For Mercy

The full meaning of this
rises in my breast,
wanting to be spoken,
but I fear
it may cast you into despair.

No.
Do not despair.

Be glad of heart.
Call upon the One
who answers the call.

Say:

Forgive us,
O You who love to forgive.
O You who hold the remedy
for this old, festering wound.

That miserable scribe
was led astray
by a reflection of wisdom.
Do not grow proud.

Do not let self-conceit
raise a duststorm from you,
until you are lost in it.

O brother,
wisdom is flowing into you,
but it comes
from the Abdal,
those hidden saints
whom God appoints as spiritual
supports,
and in you
it is only on loan.

Even if your house,
your heart,
seems lit from within,
that light has come
from a neighbouring lamp.

Give thanks.
Do not be tricked by vanity.
Do not lift your nose in disdain.

Listen closely.

Do not make yourself
the center.

It is a sorrow,
a hundred sorrows,
that this borrowed illusion,
this false state of self-importance,
has driven the communities of
faith
far from living communion in
religion.

I am the servant
of the one
who never thinks,
at any resting place on the road,
that he has already reached
the banquet of union with God.

Reflected Glow, Latent Spark

(Verses 3260-3307)

Summary

Rumi speaks to the proud human self and reminds it that all beauty, vitality, intelligence, and spiritual power are borrowed. The body shines only by the light of the spirit, just as a wall shines only by the sun. When that light withdraws, what seemed so lovely and self-sufficient returns to dust. Even the earth, on the Day of Resurrection, will testify to what human beings truly were.

The poem then turns inward, warning the believer not to trust appearances. Doubt, pride, hidden hypocrisy, and self-regard can live even inside the religious soul. Iblis is a great example: long devotion did not save him from the ruin of

arrogance. Balam, too, though gifted with spiritual rank and healing power, fell through pride when he opposed Moses. The deeper teaching is one of holy fear and humility. Real safety lies not in spiritual status, but in staying within one's bounds before God, whose saints, prophets, and friends carry a light not their own, but His.

Verses of the Poem

Borrowed Brightness

So many roadside inns
must be left behind,
before a human being
reaches home.

Iron may glow red,
but redness is not its own.
It borrows that blaze
from what has struck the fire.

If a window shines,
or a whole house fills with light,
do not call anything the true source
but the sun.

Yet every wall and door declares,
"I am bright.
No other radiance rests on me.
This light is mine."

Then the sun replies,
"You are mistaken.
Wait until I set,
and truth will show itself."

When Summer Leaves

The plants say,
"We are green by our own power.
We are laughing in bloom,
we stand tall by nature."

Summer says to them,
"Just watch yourselves
when I am gone."

The body boasts
of beauty and grace,
while the spirit hides
its wings,
its feathers,
its splendour,

and says to the body,
"O heap of dust and dung,
what are you, really?

By my rays
you came alive
for a day or two.

Your flirtations,
your pride,
your endless display
overflow all measures.
Just wait
until I rise out of you."

Then those who once adored you
will bury you.
They will hand you over
to ants
and creeping things.

The one who once fainted
with longing for you
will cover his nose
at your smell.

The spirit's rays
become speech,
sight,
and hearing.
As fire shows itself
by the bubbling of water,
so spirit shows itself
through the body.

And just as the spirit's light
falls on the body,
the rays of the Abdal,
God's hidden saints,
fall upon my soul.

When the Soul of the soul
withdraws from the soul,
the soul becomes
like a lifeless body.
Know this with certainty.

The Earth Will Speak

That is why
I lay my head upon the earth,
so that on the Day of Resurrection
she may bear witness for me.

When that Day comes,
and the earth is shaken violently,
this same earth
will tell what passed through us
and what came from us.

She will speak plainly
of all she knows.
Even stones and dust
will find a tongue.

The philosopher,
lost in opinion and speculation,
falls into denial.
Let him strike his head

against this wall.

The speech of water,
the speech of earth,
the speech of clay—
these are heard
by those who have hearts,
the people of inward seeing.

Whoever denies
the moaning pillar
is a stranger
to the saints' senses.

He says,
"Melancholy throws fantasies
into people's minds."

No.
It is the reflection
of his own unbelief and darkness
that casts this doubt
into his heart.

The philosopher denies the Devil,
even while
he is ridden by one.

If you have not seen the Devil,
look at yourself.
Without a devil's grip,
why would the forehead darken so?

Whoever carries doubt
and confusion in the heart
is, inwardly,
a philosopher of denial,
even if he outwardly speaks of
faith.

He claims certainty,
but one day
that hidden vein
will blacken his face.

Be careful, believers.
That seed is in you too.
Within you
are countless worlds.

Within you live
all the seventy-two sects.
Woe to you
if one of them
rises and takes command.

Because of this fear,
everyone blessed
with this Faith,
with Islam,
trembles like a leaf.

The Touchstone Unseen

You laughed at Iblis

and at the devils
because you thought
yourself righteous.

But when the soul
is turned inside out
and shown as it truly is,
how many cries of
"Alas for me!"
will rise even
from those who wear religion's
name.

On the counter,
every gilded coin smiles
as long as the touchstone
is out of sight.

O Coverer of faults,
do not lift the veil from us.
Protect us
in the hour of testing.

At night,
the false coin jostles with the gold.
The gold waits quietly
for morning.

By the language of its own being
it says,
"Wait, decorated fraud,
until daylight comes."

For countless years
the accursed Iblis
stood among the saints,
chief among the devoted.

But through pride
he contended with Adam,
and at dawn
his shame was exposed
like filth.

Balam's Fall

Then came Balam son of Baur,
who prayed against Moses,
asking that Moses
and his people
be turned back in defeat
from the city they had surrounded.

The people of the world
were subject to Balam.
He was like the Jesus of his age.
They bowed to no one but him.
His breath was thought
to heal the sick.

But in pride,
and in the illusion of perfection,
he stood against Moses,
and his end became
what you have heard.

And so it has always been.
Openly or in secret,
there have been
hundreds of thousands
like Iblis
and like Balam.

God made these two notorious
so they might stand
as witnesses against the rest.

These two thieves
He hung high on the gallows,
a warning to all.
Otherwise,
many thieves remained
within the reach of His justice.

These two
He dragged out into the open.
But who could count
all those taken
by Divine wrath?

So yes,
you may be favoured by God,
but only within your bounds.
Fear God.
Fear God.
Do not step beyond the line.

If you struggle
against one more favoured than
you,
you may be cast down
to the lowest depth
of the seventh earth.

Why else
are the stories of Ad and Thamud
told?
So that you may know
the prophets do not submit
to the arrogant and corrupt.

Vanity's Trial by Fire

(Verses 3308-3359)

Summary

Rumi speaks of the difference between lower, fragmented intelligence and the Universal Reason that shines most fully in prophets and saints. He warns that when a human being rebels against this higher command, he falls beneath his own station. The passage then turns to Harut and Marut, the two angels who became proud of their purity. Seeing the sins of humanity, they judged harshly, forgetting that their own innocence was only a gift from God, not something self-made.

The deeper movement of the poem is from pride to humility. Rumi reminds us that outward strength, form, and self-confidence are powerless before Divine Reality. Everything moves by that hidden Reality, as straws move in the sea. Even

spiritual safety is borrowed light. The central transformation is the breaking of self-righteousness: what we call zeal for religion may really be ego and hellfire. True religion makes the world green. True knowledge does not imitate holy sounds from the outside, but enters the living heart of meaning, where all gifts are known to come from God alone.

Verses of the Poem

The Measure Of Reason

These signs,
the swallowing earth,
the rain of stones,
the striking thunderbolt,

all bore witness
to the power
of the Rational Soul.

For the sake of man,
the animals are slain.
For the sake of Reason,
mankind itself is offered.

What is Reason?
It is the Universal Intellect,
alive in the fully awakened human being,
the prophet,
the saint.

Partial reason exists too,
but it is frail,
unsteady,
wounded.

Every beast that turns savage
against the human being
falls beneath the human station.
Its blood is permitted,
for it has not risen
to human acts.

The worth of wild creatures
is cast down
when they become hostile to man.
Then what remains of your honour,
strange fool,
if you have become
like a frightened wild ass?

Turning Wild

The donkey,
because it serves,

should not be killed.
But once it turns wild,
its blood becomes lawful.

Though the donkey had no
knowledge
to restrain itself,
the Loving One
does not excuse it.

Then how shall a human being be
excused,
dear friend,
when he turns wild
against the Word,
against the voice of Reason?

That is why permission was given
for battle against the unbeliever,
as with a wild beast
before the spear and arrow.
Their wives and children
became spoil,
because they stood in fierce
aversion
to the majestic Reason.

And any mind
that runs from the Reason of
reason,
from the Universal Reason,
is carried down
from humanity
into the rank of animals.

The Fall Of Harut And Marut

Look at Harut and Marut.
Those famous ones,
struck down
by the poisoned arrow
of Divine wrath.

Their downfall began
in confidence
in their own purity.
But what use is the buffalo's
confidence
before the lion?

Let it thrust its horns
a hundred ways,
the lion will still tear it apart,
limb from limb.

Even if it bristles
like a hedgehog with spikes,
still the buffalo
must fall
before the lion.

And yet,
though the sarsar wind
uproots mighty trees,
it leaves each blade of grass

fresh and shining.

That harsh wind
showed mercy
to the weakness of grass.
So do not boast, heart,
of your own strength.

How could the axe
fear thick branches?
It cuts them to pieces.

Yet it does not strike itself
against a leaf.
Its edge meets only
what has an edge.

Why should flame care
for heaps of firewood?
Why should the butcher
be terrified
by a multitude of sheep?

Form And Reality

What is outward form
beside reality?
Weak,
very weak.

It is the sky's inner reality
that holds it aloft,
upturned above us.

Look at the turning heavens.
From where comes their motion?
From guiding Reason.

The movement of this shield-like
body
comes from the hidden spirit,
dear one.

The wind moves
from its unseen reality,
as the wheel turns
by the stream's water.

This breath,
its coming and going,
its ebb and flow,
from where does it arise
but from the spirit,
restless with longing?

Now that spirit
makes breath into letters,
now jim,
now ha,
now dal.
Now it becomes peace,
now conflict.

In just this way
God made the wind

a dragon
against the people of Ad.

Then again,
He made that same wind
coolness,
safety,
tender regard,
for the true believers.

"The Reality is Allah,"
said the Shaykh of the religion,
that sea
of the Lord's spiritual truths.

All the levels
of earth and heaven
are no more
than straws
upon that flowing sea.

Straws In The Sea

The tossing of straws in water
comes from the water itself
when it stirs.

When that sea of Reality
wills to quiet them,
it casts them toward the shore.

When it draws them back
into the surge,
it does with them
what the sarsar wind does
with the grass.

This theme has no end.
Come back now,
young seeker,
to Harut and Marut.

Judging From Above

From the latticed window of
heaven,
they looked down
and saw the sins
and the corruption of the people
below.

In anger
they bit their hands,
yet they saw nothing
of their own defect.

Like an ugly man
who catches sight of himself
in a mirror,
then turns away in disgust
and grows angry.

When the self-satisfied one
sees another sin,
a fire rises in him,
a flame from Hell.

He names that pride
"defence of religion,"
yet he does not see
the arrogant soul
inside himself.

But true defence of religion
is something else.
From that fire,
a whole world grows green.

God said to them,
"If you have light,
then do not look with contempt
on those darkened doers
who have been made forgetful.

Give thanks,
O heavenly host,
O servants of God.
You have been spared lust
and the pull of sexual union.

If I were to place
that nature in you,
heaven itself
would no longer receive you.

The protection you carry
in your bodies
is only the reflection
of My protection,
My care.

So beware.
See it as Mine,
not your own,
lest the accursed Devil
gain power over you."

Borrowed Light

Like the scribe
who wrote down Revelation
for the Prophet,
and imagined
that wisdom
and primal light
belonged to him.

He thought himself
a companion in song
to the birds of God.
But what came from him
was only a whistle,
an echo-like imitation.

If all you learn
is how to mimic birdsong,
how will you ever know
the bird's true meaning?

If you memorize
the nightingale's note,

how will you know
what it feels
toward the rose?

And even if you guess,
it will be only guesswork,
analogy,
supposition,

like deaf people
trying to understand speech
by watching
the movement of lips.

When Hearing Turns Astray

(Verses 3360-3414)

Summary

Rumi begins with a simple, almost comic story: a deaf man visits a sick neighbour, but because he relies on his own guesses instead of truly hearing, every word he offers becomes a wound. He thinks he is being kind, dutiful, even virtuous, yet his visit only increases pain. The story becomes a mirror of all outward piety secretly mixed with ego, self-approval, or false certainty.

From that small scene, the teaching widens. Rumi turns from the deaf man's mistaken guessing to a deeper spiritual warning: human beings often approach Divine truth the same way, using crude analogy, personal opinion, and sensory logic, where humility and inner hearing are required. Iblis becomes a great example of this error, comparing fire and clay and missing the mystery of God's

command. The passage calls the seeker away from prideful reasoning toward surrender, reverence, and the inner hearing by which saints receive truth. What seems like a tale of social awkwardness becomes a profound lesson in adab, spiritual humility, and the danger of mistaking one's own thoughts for God's meaning.

Verses of the Poem

A Visit Misheard

A wealthy man said
to a deaf neighbour,
"Someone near you is sick."

The deaf man thought,
"My hearing is poor.
How will I catch
what that young man says?

And now he is ill,
his voice will be weak.
Still, I have to go.
There is no avoiding it.

When I see his lips move,
I will guess the meaning
from my own idea of things.

I will ask,
'How are you,
my suffering friend?'
He will surely say,
'I am well,'
or,
'I am somewhat better.'

Then I will say,
'Praise be to God.
What have you been drinking?'

And he will answer,
'A sweet drink,'
or,
'A broth of beans.'

Then I will say,
'May it bring you health.
Which doctor is caring for you?'

And he will name someone,
and I will answer,
'Excellent.
His coming is blessed.
Wherever he steps,
good comes of it.

I have seen the fortune
in his footfall myself.'"

So the good man
prepared all these replies
inside his mind,
and went to visit the sick man.

The Wrong Reply

He asked,
"How are you?"

The sick man said,
"I am at the edge of death."

"Thanks be to God,"
the deaf man replied.

At once
the patient burned
with hurt and anger.

He thought,
"What kind of thanks is this?
He must be my enemy."

The deaf man had guessed,
and his guess
had gone astray.

Then he asked,
"What have you had to drink?"

"Poison,"
the sick man said.

"May it benefit you,
may it restore your health,"
said the deaf man.

The sick man's fury
grew hotter.

Then he asked,
"Which doctor is coming
to see you?"

The sick man answered,
"Azrael is coming,
the Angel of Death.
Now leave me."

And the deaf man said,
"Blessed is his arrival.
You should rejoice."

Then the deaf man left,
cheerful and satisfied.

"Thank God," he said.
"I have done my duty.
Now I may take my leave."

But the sick man said

within himself,
"This man is my mortal enemy.
I never knew
such darkness lived in him."

His mind searched
for a hundred insults
to send after him.

Like bad food
churning the stomach
until it rises upward,
so anger twists the heart.

But if you can bear it
and not let it spill,
something sweeter
may come in return.

Hidden Motives

The patient had no patience,
so he suffered more.

"Where is that cur?"
he cried.
"That shameless fool.

Let him return,
so I may answer him
in his own kind."

For in that moment
the lion of his thought
had been asleep.
He was too weak
to answer back.

A visit to the sick
is meant
to bring rest,
to bring peace.

This was no healing visit.
It was an enemy's delight.

His hidden wish was this,
to see me broken,
to see me frail,
and let his dark heart
be comforted.

Many perform devotions
only so others will approve,
or so they may be repaid.

What looks clean
may hide a secret stain.

Like the deaf man,
who believed
he had done a kindness,
while the result
was the opposite.

He sits pleased with himself,
saying,
"I honoured my neighbour.
I fulfilled
what was due."

Yet he has only
lit a fire
in the sick man's heart,
and burned himself in it.

So beware
the fire you kindle.
You may be feeding sin
while calling it goodness.

Guide Us Rightly

The Prophet once said,
"Pray again.
You have not truly prayed."

And for this reason
every prayer says,
"Guide us"—

meaning,
"O God,
do not let my prayer
be mixed
with the prayer
of those who stray,
or those who wear devotion
as a mask."

By the deaf man's
self-made analogy,
ten years of friendship
were brought to nothing.

And even more,
dear friend,
beware the analogies
of the lowly senses
when they approach Revelation,
which has no limit.

If your outward ear
can catch only the letter,
know this—
the ear that hears
the hidden meaning
may still be deaf.

Iblis And Comparison

The first to measure
Revealed Truth
by analogy
was Iblis.

The first to bring
these petty comparisons
before the Lights of God
was Iblis.

He said,
"Fire is surely better
than earth.
I am made of fire,
and Adam is made
of dark clay.

So let us judge
the branch by the root.
He comes from dust,
I from bright flame."

But God said,
"No.
This path is not built
on such comparisons.

Nearness is not won
through claims of substance.
Its way is through
taqwa—reverent God-
consciousness,
through piety,
through surrender."

This is not
an inheritance
of the passing world,
to be gained by lineage
or blood.

It is a spiritual inheritance.
It belongs
to the prophets.
Its true heirs
are the souls
of the devoted.

The son of Abu Jahl
came to faith.
The son of Noah
went astray.

The child of earth, Adam,
was made radiant
like the moon.

And you, child of fire—
go now,
black-faced with disgrace.

When The Sun Is Present

Reason and careful inference
have their place,
on a cloudy day,
or in the dark of night,
when one is searching
for the qibla.

But when the sun is shining,
when the Ka'ba stands
before your face,
do not keep arguing

from guesswork.

Do not pretend
you cannot see.
Do not turn your face away
because your reasoning
has led you elsewhere.

God knows best
what is right.

When a song rises
from the Bird of God—
the living spirit,
the messenger of the Real—
you memorize
its outer sound
like a lesson.

Then from your own mind
you spin comparisons.
You turn imagination
into supposed truth.

The Abdal,
those hidden saints
whom God sustains,
have expressions
the scholars of outward forms
do not understand.

You have learned
only the sound
of the birds' language.
From that alone
you build a hundred analogies,
a hundred fantasies.

And so you wound
the hearts of saints,
just as the deaf man
hurt the sick man—

while all the while
you are delighted
with your imagined success.

The scribe of Revelation,
hearing the Bird's voice,
imagined himself
the Bird's equal.

Then the Bird
beat a wing,
and blinded him.

It cast him down
into the abyss
of ruin and death.

So beware.

Do not let
a reflection,

a passing opinion,
or a borrowed gleam
make you fall
from Heaven's honors.

The Vanity of High Flight

(Verses 3415-3465)

Summary

Rumi begins with the story of Harut and Marut, the angels whose nearness to heaven did not save them from the hidden danger of pride. Even beings of light may fall when they trust their own purity instead of God's protection. Their error is subtle: while speaking humility with the tongue, they secretly believe themselves safe from corruption. From there, the poem widens into a warning for all seekers. Spiritual states are easily misunderstood when displayed before the unready, just as a drunken lover of God becomes a laughingstock among children who know nothing of the wine.

The passage then turns toward one of Rumi's central teachings: most human striving is childish play unless the soul is freed from ego and desire. Ordinary

knowledge, imagination, and opinion are not condemned, but they are shown to be small, like toy horses beside the true ascent of the spirit. Real knowledge is not mere accumulation; it becomes light only when it enters the heart and is purified by sincerity.

By the end, the poem invites the reader beyond names, forms, and borrowed understanding. The goal is not to reject sacred language, but to pass through it into living reality, until the heart itself becomes a polished mirror. Then prophetic knowledge is tasted inwardly, as Water of Life, and the soul begins to awaken into a deeper identity beyond its former self.

Verses of the Poem

The Hidden Snare

Though you are like Harut and
Marut,
high among the ranks of heaven,
still, have mercy
on the sins of the sinful.

Do not cling
to self-regard,
to the sweetness of your own
image.

Be careful.
Divine jealousy can come unseen,
from a hidden place,
and cast you down
to the depths of the earth.

They answered,
"O God, the command is Yours.
Without Your protection,
what safety is there?"

Yet even while they spoke,
their hearts trembled with desire.

Within, a thought was stirring,
"How could evil come from us?
We are good servants.
We are pure."

The sting of desire
did not leave those two angels,
until it planted
the seed of pride.

Then they said,

"O you made of earth's four
elements,
you who do not know
the purity of the spirits,

We will spread curtains of light
across this sky.
We will descend to the earth,
pitch our tent there,

Establish justice,
offer worship,
and each night
rise again to heaven,

So the world may marvel at us,
and the earth may rest secure
through us."

But the likeness
between heaven and earth
is not exact.

A hidden difference
lies there.

Wine Kept Hidden

Listen
to the sage of solitude:

"Lay your head down
where you drank the wine."

When a drunkard leaves the tavern
and wanders in the street,
children laugh at him
and make a game of him.

Whichever way he goes,
he falls in the mud,
now here,
now there.

Every fool laughs,
while children trail behind him,
knowing nothing
of his intoxication,
nothing
of the taste of his wine.

All people are children,
except the one
made drunk with God.

No one is fully grown
until released
from the pull of desire.

God said,
"This world is play
and passing amusement,"
and God speaks the truth.

As long as you have not stepped
beyond play,
you are still a child.
Without purity of spirit,
how will you become truly mature?

Know this, young friend:
the lusts people chase in this world
are like the love-play of children.

What is that,
beside the union
of a Rustam,
a lion-hearted champion?

Human wars too
are like children's quarrels,
empty, hollow,
without substance.

Their swords are wooden.
Their aims are trivial.

They ride a reed-cane
like a hobby horse,
crying,
"This is our Buraq,
our swift mule,
our Duldul!"

They themselves
carry the toy,
yet in their foolishness
imagine
they are being carried.

Wait for the day
when those borne by God
race beyond
the nine heavens.

The True Ascent

"The Spirit and the angels ascend
to Him."
When the spirit rises,
heaven itself trembles.

But you,
like children,
ride your own skirts,
grasping the hem
and pretending it is a horse.

From God came the word:
"Opinion cannot replace the
Truth."

When did the mount of opinion
ever run to heaven?

When the sun is shining,
why keep doubting
whether you see it?

At that hour
when the spirit returns,
look well
at your horses.

You made a steed
out of your own foot.

Come, understand this:
your imagination,
your thinking,
your senses,
your mental grasp—

all these
are like the reed-cane horse
a child rides.

The knowledge of the friends of God
lifts them upward.
The knowledge of those bound to the senses
weighs them down.

When knowledge strikes the heart,
it becomes a friend.

When it settles only in the body,
it becomes a burden.

God has said
of the donkey loaded with books—
knowledge not drawn from Him
is a load.

Knowledge not received
from His nearness
does not endure.

It is like borrowed paint
on the face.

Yet if you carry this burden well,
the burden will one day be lifted,
and joy
will be given to you.

So be warned:
do not carry knowledge
for the sake of self,
for vanity,
for desire.

Empty yourself,
so knowledge may become
a smooth-paced steed,
and carry you.

Then at last
the load will fall
from your shoulders.

How will you be freed

from selfish desire
without the cup of Hu—
of Him?

You have been content
with no more of Hu
than His name.

But what is born
from name and attribute alone?

Imagination.

And even that imagination
may become a road
toward union.

Beyond Name

Have you ever seen
something shown
without something real
to be shown?

Without a road,
there is no ghoul
to lure the traveller astray.

Have you ever found a name
without a reality?

Have you ever plucked a rose
from the letters
that spell "rose"?

You have spoken the name.
Now go seek
the thing itself.

Know that the moon
is above—
not in the water.

If you wish to pass
beyond name
and letter,
be wholly cleansed
of self.

Be like polished iron.
Lose the rust-colour.
In discipline,
become a mirror
without stain.

Purify yourself
of the qualities of ego,
so you may see
your own clear essence,
untouched.

Then within your heart
you will behold
the sciences of the prophets,

without book,
without teacher,
without master.

The Prophet said,
"Among my community
are those
whose nature and longing
are one with mine.

Their spirits behold me
by the very light
through which I behold them."

Not through collections,
reports,
or chains of transmitters—

but in the place
where they drink
the Water of Life.

Know the secret
of the saying,
"In the evening I was a Kurd,
in the morning I was an Arab."

Read the mystery there:
the self does not remain fixed,
when dawn enters the soul.

Polished Hearts, Secret Glow

(Verses 3466-3499)

Summary

Rumi tells a parable about two kinds of knowing. On one side are the Chinese painters, skilled in colour, craft, and outward beauty. On the other hand, the Greeks do not compete by adding more forms, but by polishing their wall until it becomes a flawless mirror. When the king sees the final result, the Greeks' bare wall reveals a beauty even greater than the paintings themselves, because it reflects them with perfect clarity. The story turns gently from art to the soul.

Here, Rumi is really speaking to the seeker. The polished wall becomes the Sufi heart, cleansed of greed, resentment, and self-interest. Such a heart does not merely think about truth; it receives it. This is why he speaks of Moses, of the boundless heart, and of a knowing beyond books or argument. The passage leads

toward yaqin, the eye of certainty, and toward faqr and mahw—holy poverty before God, and the fading of the separate self. When the heart is polished, Divine Beauty appears there without distortion.

Verses of the Poem

Facing Walls

If you want a parable
for hidden knowing,

tell the story
of the Greeks
and the Chinese.

Their quarrel was over painting,
over image-making,
over art.

The Chinese said,
"We are the finest painters."
The Greeks said,
"No, the deeper mastery
belongs to us."

The Sultan said,
"I will test this claim,
and see
whose truth appears."

They argued for a time.
Then the Greeks
stepped away
from debate.

Two Rooms

The Chinese said,
"Give us one room,
and give them another."

Two chambers were chosen,
door facing door.
The Chinese took one,
the Greeks the other.

The Chinese asked the King
for a hundred colours.
He opened his treasury,
so they could take
what they needed.

Morning after morning,
through the King's generosity,
colours were brought out
for the Chinese.

But the Greeks said,

"For our work,
no dyes are needed,
no pigments,
no colours at all.
We need only
to clear away the rust."

The Work Of Polishing

They closed their door
and began to polish.

They kept polishing
until their wall
grew pure and shining,
clear as the sky.

There is a road
from many colours
to colourlessness.

Colour is like the clouds.
Colourlessness
is the moon.

Whatever radiance
you see in the clouds,
know that it comes
from stars,
from moon,
from sun.

When the Chinese
had finished their art,
they beat their drums
for joy.

The King entered
and saw their paintings.
The beauty of them
stole away his senses.

The Inner Mirror

Then he turned
toward the Greeks.
They lifted
the curtain between.

And there,
on those walls
made clean and pure,
the reflection
of the Chinese paintings
appeared.

What he had seen there
now seemed
even more beautiful here,
so beautiful
it seized the eye
itself.

The Greeks, dear friend,
are like the Sufis.
They are not dependent

on study,
or books,
or learned display.

But they have polished
the breast,
the heart's inner chamber,
until it is clean
of greed,
of craving,
of stinginess,
of resentment,
of hatred.

That clarity of the mirror,
without doubt,
is the heart,
the heart that can receive
countless images.

The Boundless Heart

In the breast of Moses,
the perfected saint,
there is held
the formless, endless form
of the Unseen,
reflected
in the mirror of the heart.

That reality is not contained
in heaven,
nor in the highest sphere,
nor in the turning stars,
nor in the earth below.

All those are measured.
All those are bounded.

But the heart's mirror,
know this,
has no limit.

Here the intellect
falls silent,
or else it slips
into error.

For the heart
is with God...
or rather,
the heart is His place of nearness,
so near
language trembles.

Beyond Scent And Color

The reflection
of every image
shines only from the heart,
forever,

whether in multiplicity,
or beyond multiplicity.

Each fresh image

that falls upon it
appears there
without flaw.

Those who polish the heart
have gone beyond
mere scent and colour.

At every moment
they behold Beauty,
without delay,
without turning aside.

They have left behind
the outer form,
the shell of knowledge.
They have raised
the banner
of the eye of certainty,
the seeing that knows directly.

Thought has fallen away.
Light has come.

They have reached
the living core,
the very sea
of gnosis,
of marifa,
the deep knowing of God.

Those Who Do Not Fear Death

The death
that terrifies others,
these people
hold in laughter.

No one prevails
against their hearts.
The blow strikes
the shell of the oyster,
never the pearl.

Though they have let go
of grammar
and legal disputation,
they have taken up instead
self-effacement,
mahw—the erasing
of the ego's claim—
and spiritual poverty,
faqr—the soul's neediness
before God alone.

Since the forms
of the Eight Paradises
have dawned before them,
the tablets of their hearts
have become receptive.

They receive
a hundred impressions
from the highest heaven,
from the turning spheres,

from the unseen vastness.

What impressions?
No, not merely impressions.

It is the vision
of God.

Dawn Of Inner Seeing

(Verses 3500-3544)

Summary

The Prophet (PBUH) asks Zayd a simple question about his state that morning. What begins as an ordinary exchange quickly becomes a revelation. Zayd answers not with a claim about outward devotion, but with the inward marks of faith: thirst, sleeplessness, burning love, and a vision that has carried him beyond the world of opposites. In that state, he sees the unseen—Paradise and Hell, the final destiny of souls, and the hidden truth already forming within each person like a child in the womb.

The passage turns on the great Sufi image of death as birth. This bodily life is the womb, and only when the soul is born into the next world does its true nature become fully visible. Zayd speaks from a station of unveiled seeing, what

the tradition calls seeing by the light of God. He longs to tear away the curtains and make the Resurrection manifest now, but the Prophet (PBUH) reins him in. The poem holds both truths together: the soul may be flooded with Divine disclosure, yet adab—sacred restraint before the Messenger and before God's wisdom—must remain.

Verses of the Poem

Morning Question

One morning,
the Prophet said to Zayd,

"How are you this morning,
O truthful companion?"

Zayd replied,

"This morning,
I am God's true servant."

Again the Prophet asked,

"If the garden of faith
has truly flowered in you,
where is its sign?"

Beyond Day And Night

Zayd said,

"In the day,
I have burned with thirst.

At night,
sleep has left me,

because love,
and grief like fire,
would not let me rest.

So I passed through day and night
as a spear-point passes
through a shield.

Beyond this field of opposites,
birth and growth are one.

There,
a hundred thousand years
are the same as one hour.

There,
everlastingness and eternity
are joined as one.

The reasoning mind
cannot reach that place
by questioning."

The Prophet said,

"What gift have you brought back
from this journey?

Show me the token
of your truthfulness,
from that beautiful land."

The Unseen Made Clear

Zayd said,

"When others look at the sky,
I see the highest heaven,
and those who dwell there.

The eight Gardens,
and the seven Hells,
stand before me as plainly
as an idol before the idol-
worshipper.

I can discern people,
one by one,

as grain is sorted
from chaff in the mill.

I see clearly
who belongs to Paradise,
and who will be left outside it,

as clearly
as the difference
between a snake and a fish.

The true birthday
of Anatolian and Ethiopian,
of every people and every race,
is that Day

when faces
are made white or black."

Before that birth,
even if a spirit is stained with sin,
it remains hidden in the body's
womb,
veiled from the sight of people.

Those destined for loss
are marked even in the womb.

Those destined for mercy
are marked as well,
by the signs of God.

The body is like a mother,
pregnant with the spirit-child.

Death
is the labor
and pain of birth.

The Birth Beyond Death

All the spirits
who have crossed over
wait to see

in what form
this proud spirit
will be born.

The darkened ones say,
"It belongs with us."

The radiant ones say,
"No, it is beautiful."

But once it is born
into the world of spirit
and Divine grace,

there is no more dispute
between white and black.

If it belongs to darkness,
the darkened gather it.

If it belongs to light,
the luminous lead it away.

Until that birth,
it remains a riddle
to the world.

Very few
can know the unborn one.

Such a seer
truly sees by the light of God,
for within this skin
he has found the hidden way.

The seed-water
may appear white and fair,
but the reflected colour of the
spirit—

whether Anatolian,
or Ethiopian—

gives splendor
to the noble in their true nature,
and drives the other kind
downward
into the lowest depth.

This speech has no end.
Return quickly,
before the caravan moves on
and leaves us behind.

On the Day

when faces are whitened or
darkened,
who will still honour
Turk and Hindu alike?

In the womb of this world,
Turk and Hindu cannot be told
apart.

But when each is born
into the next world,
the seer beholds

who is radiant,
and who is miserable,
according to the truth
of the soul.

A Veil About To Tear

"I see them all plainly,
as they shall stand
on the Day of Resurrection—

crowds of men and women,
gathered before God.

Tell me—
shall I speak,
or hold my breath in silence?"

Mustafa,
the Messenger of God,
bit Zayd's lip,

as though to say,
"Enough."

But Zayd went on:

"O Messenger of Allah,
shall I unveil the secret
of the Gathering?

Shall I make the Resurrection
appear in this world
today?

Let me be,
so I may tear the curtains apart,

so that what is within me
may shine out
like the sun.

Let me rise so fully
that even the sun
seems eclipsed beside me.

Let me show
the fruitful date-palm
and the barren willow.

Let me reveal
the secret of Resurrection—

the pure coin,
and the counterfeit mixed with
alloy.

Let me show
the people of the left hand,

and unveil the color
of unbelief,
and the color
of the Prophet's people.

Let me expose
the seven hidden cracks
of hypocrisy,

in the light
of a moon
that never wanes
and never suffers eclipse.

Let me display
the rough wool garments
of the damned.

Let me make heard
the drums
and kettledrums
of the prophets.

Let me place Hell,
the Gardens of Paradise,
and the in-between realm
plainly before the eyes
of the unbelievers.

Let me show
the surging Pool of Kawthar,
its waves splashing
the faces of the blessed,
its sound ringing
in their ears.

And those who run around it,
burning with thirst,
I could name
one by one.

I know who they are.

Their shoulders press against mine.
Their cries pierce my ears.

Before my eyes,
the people of Paradise
embrace each other freely.

They visit one another
in their high stations of honor,
and steal kisses
from the lips of the houris.

And this ear of mine

has grown deaf
from the cries of 'Alas! Alas!'
from the ruined ones,

and from the screams
of 'O sorrow!'"

These are only hints.

"I would speak
from the depth
of what I know,

but I fear
I may wound
the Messenger of Allah."

He spoke like this,
drunk on vision,
shaken out of himself.

Then the Prophet
pulled at his collar
and said,

"Take care.
Draw back.

Your horse
has grown hot.

When the reflection of God
strikes the heart,
and is not ashamed
to speak the truth,
all shame disappears.

The Mirror Cannot Hide

(Verses 3545-3607)

Summary

Rumi begins with the image of the mirror and the balance, both symbols of uncompromising truth. They cannot flatter, hide, or distort what is real. In this passage, the speaker moves between prophetic counsel, Zayd's bold reply, and Rumi's own spiritual teaching, all circling one central truth: what God has made as a means of unveiling cannot become an instrument of concealment. The heart, when purified, becomes like Solomon—able to govern the senses, direct perception, and rule the inner kingdom. But when deceit enters, that seal is lost, and the self falls under the power of lower forces.

Then the teaching turns to the story of Luqman, whose innocence is revealed through a simple but piercing test. What was hidden in each servant comes out

under pressure. This becomes a sign of the Last Day, when all inward realities are laid bare. Fire, hot water, mirror, scale, and seal all point toward one Sufi truth: the soul becomes joined to what it loves and what it serves. To turn toward light is to become light-ready. To turn toward the Beloved is to leave the prison of the ego and draw near to God.

Verses of the Poem

The Uncovered Truth

Your mirror has slipped free of its case.
How could a mirror lie?
How could a balance deceive?

How could mirror and scale
hold back their breath,
afraid to wound someone,
afraid to bring shame?

They are noble touchstones.
Even if you served them
for two hundred years,

and pleaded,
"For my sake, hide the truth.
Show what is extra,
do not show what is lacking,"

they would answer,
"Do not mock your own face.
What place have deceit and trickery
with a mirror,
with a balance?"

Since God has raised us up
so that truth may be known
through us,
if we fail in that,
what worth have we,
young man?

How could we remain
a clear measure
for the face of beauty?

The Prophet said,
"Wrap the mirror again in cloth,
if Divine light
has turned your breast into Sinai."

The Sun Breaks Through

Zayd said,
"How could the Sun of Truth,
the Sun of Eternity,

ever be hidden under an arm?

It tears apart
both concealment and fraud.
When it appears,
madness and reason alike
are swept away."

He said,
"If you place one finger
over your eye,
the world seems emptied of the
sun.

A fingertip
becomes a veil over the moon.
This too is a sign
of God's covering.

So a single point
can hide a whole world,
and a splinter
can eclipse the sun."

Close your lips.
Look into the depth
of the sea within you.

God made the sea
subject to the human being,
just as the fountains
of Salsabil and Zanjabil—
the rivers of Paradise—
are entrusted to the exalted ones
there.

The four rivers of Paradise
are under our command,
not by our own power,
but by God's decree.

They flow where we direct them,
as wonder-working moves
by the leave of the wonder-worker.

The Heart Commands

In the same way,
these two flowing springs,
your eyes,
are under the heart's command,
and under the spirit's command.

If the heart wills,
they turn toward poison
and the snake.

If it wills,
they turn toward reflection
and insight.

If it wills,
they run after the senses.
If it wills,
they turn toward inward forms,

thought,
and imagination.

If it wills,
they rise toward universals.
If it wills,
they stay bound
to particulars.

So too the five senses
move by the heart's command,
like thread
following the weaver's spool.

All five are drawn along
in whatever direction
the heart points.

Hand and foot, plainly,
serve the heart,
like Moses' staff
in Moses' hand.

If the heart wills,
the foot begins to dance.
If the heart wills,
it flees from loss
toward increase.

If the heart wills,
the hand joins with the fingers
to write a book.

Yet that hand itself
rests in a hidden hand.
What is inward
sets the outer body to work.

If that hidden hand wills,
the hand becomes a snake
against an enemy.

If it wills,
it becomes help
for a friend.

If it wills,
it becomes a spoon
lifting food.

If it wills,
it becomes a mace
of crushing weight.

What is the heart saying
to all these limbs?
What a strange bond this is,
what a hidden tie.

Solomon Within

Surely the heart
has received Solomon's seal,
and by that seal
it draws the reins

of the five senses.

The five outward senses
are easy for it to govern.
The five inward faculties
also obey its command.

Ten senses,
seven limbs,
and more besides—
count for yourself
what has not been named.

O heart,
since you are a Solomon
in this kingdom,
cast your seal-ring
over peri and demon.

If in this realm
you are free of deceit,
the three demons
will not snatch
the seal from your hand.

Then your name
will master the world.
The two worlds
will come beneath your rule,
as your own body already is.

But if the demon
takes the seal from your hand,
your kingdom is gone,
your fortune is dead.

Then the cry becomes,
"O grief, O sorrow,"
until the Day
when all are gathered.

And if you deny
the deceit within you,
how will you save yourself
from the balance
and the mirror?

Luqman Tested

They cast suspicion on Luqman.
The slaves and fellow-servants said
that he had eaten
the fresh fruit
they were carrying
to their master.

In his master's eyes,
beside the other slaves,
Luqman looked lowly
because of his outward form.

His master would send
the slaves to the garden
to bring fruit
for his pleasure.

Among them, Luqman was
despised,
like one of no account—
dark in complexion as night,
yet inwardly full
of living wisdom.

The other slaves,
driven by greed,
ate all the fruit with delight.

Then they told their master,
"Luqman ate it."
The master grew bitter,
angry,
deeply displeased with him.

When Luqman learned the cause,
he opened his lips
and reproached his master.

He said,
"My lord,
an unfaithful servant
finds no favor with God.

Test us all,
noble sir.
Give each of us
hot water to drink,
until we are full.

Then drive us
running across a wide plain,
you on horseback,
we on foot.

Then watch,
and see the wrongdoer.
See what is unveiled
by the One
who reveals hidden things."

The master gave them hot water,
and in fear
they drank.

Then he drove them
into the open fields,
and they ran
through the standing grain.

From distress
they began to vomit.
The hot water
brought up the fruit
from within them.

But when Luqman vomited,
from his belly
there came only
clear water.

If Luqman's wisdom
could make the hidden plain,
what must the wisdom be
of the Lord of all existence?

The Day Of Unveiling

On the day
when all inner secrets
are searched out,
something concealed
will rise from within you—
something you would not wish
to appear.

When they are given
scalding water to drink,
all veils will be torn away
from what is hateful.

The Fire is made
the torment of unbelief,
because fire
is the true test for stone.

How often,
how often
have we spoken gently
to these stony hearts,
and still they would not accept
good counsel.

A deep wound
needs a severe remedy.
A donkey's stubborn head
meets the dog's harsh teeth.

Wicked women
for wicked men—
there is wisdom in that.
The ugly belongs
with the ugly.

So whatever you long
to be joined with,
give yourself to it fully.
Take on its shape,
its qualities.

If you desire light,
prepare yourself
to receive light.

If you desire distance from God,
then become proud,
be full of self-regard,
and go farther away.

And if you seek
a way out
of this ruined prison,
do not turn your head
from the Beloved.
Bow down.
Draw near.

The Fine Partition

(Verses 3608-3666)

Summary

The poem moves through a tender tension between unveiling and concealment. One voice urges restraint: God keeps the unseen veiled for a mercy-filled purpose, so that hope and fear may continue to guide souls toward worship. If everything were revealed at once, faith would lose its hidden beauty. Rumi then turns to the image of Solomon in disguise: while truth is hidden, the mind wavers and imagines; when the true king appears openly, doubt dissolves.

From there, the passage deepens into a praise of faithfulness in absence. The one who serves the king from far away is more honoured than the one who serves only in the king's visible presence. Angels, prophets, and saints become mediating lights—stars, moon, and reflected radiance—helping weaker souls

bear what they cannot yet receive directly from the Divine Sun. The Prophet is presented as a merciful, human presence in the face of overwhelming truth. The passage ends by reminding the seeker that when the heart is purified of lower desire, it becomes a throne for Divine mercy, yet such mysteries must be carried humbly, without self-display.

Verses of the Poem

The Veil Remains

This speaking has no end.

Rise, O Zayd.
Fasten a bridle
on the Buraq of your reasoning
spirit.

That rational spirit
keeps uncovering faults,
tearing open
the curtains of concealment.

For a while,
God wants the veil to remain.
Send this drummer away,
close the road.

Do not rush forward.
Hold back the reins.
Better that this spirit
stay veiled for now.

Better that each person
be comforted,
for a time,
by the hope their own imagination
gives.

God wills
that even those sunk in despair
should not turn their faces away
from worship.

Even a hope not yet fulfilled
can ennoble them.
For a few days,
they still run behind that stirrup.

His mercy wants to shine
on all,
the bad and the good alike,
because His mercy is vast.

He wants every ruler
and every captive

to live in hope,
and also in fear.

Hope and fear
belong to the veil.
Behind that curtain,
they are nourished and kept alive.

But when the veil is torn away,
where will hope be,
and where will fear be?

Majesty, power,
and the testing of souls
belong to the unseen.

When Solomon Appears

A young man stood
on the bank of a river
and thought,

"Our fisherman looks like
Solomon.
But if he truly is Solomon,
why is he alone,
and hidden in disguise?

And if he is not Solomon,
why does he bear
the very mark
of Solomon's face?"

So he stayed divided within
himself,
uncertain,
until Solomon again
stood forth as king,
openly enthroned in power.

The demon fled
from his kingdom and his throne.
The sword of fortune
struck that devil down.

He placed the ring
upon his finger,
and the ranks of demons and peris
gathered before him.

People came to look,
and among them
was that same young man
who had wondered.

Then Solomon opened his hand,
and he saw the ring.

In that instant,
all his searching,
all his inner debating,
fell away.

Anxiety lives

only while the thing desired is
hidden.
Searching belongs
to what is unseen.

While Solomon was absent,
fancy grew strong in the young
man's heart.
When Solomon stood present,
fancy disappeared.

If the bright sky
is never without rain,
the dark earth too
is never without growth.

God says, in meaning:
They believe in the unseen.
For that reason
I have closed the window
of this passing world.

If I were to open it fully,
as on the Day of the Last Trumpet,
how then could I say,
"Do you see any crack in it?"

Faith In Absence

So in this darkness
people may strive,
turning their faces,
each one,
toward some direction.

For a while,
things are turned upside down.
The thief may drag
the magistrate to the gallows.

For a while,
many a sultan,
many a soul of high rank,
becomes the servant
of his own servant.

Service in absence
is beautiful.
When God asks for faithfulness,
it pleases Him
that the absent One
be remembered.

What is the praise
of one who praises a king
in the king's own presence,

compared with the one
who, far away,
keeps modest faith
in absence?

Think of the keeper
of a frontier fortress,
far from the sultan,

far from the shelter
of the royal court,

yet guarding the stronghold
against the enemy,
and refusing to sell it
for endless wealth.

Though far from the king,
out on the edge of the realm,
he remains loyal
as though he stood
before the throne itself.

In the king's sight,
that one is better
than all the rest
who serve nearby
and would lay down their lives
in the king's own presence.

So even half an atom
of faithfulness in absence
is better
than a hundred thousand acts
of duty performed in plain sight.

Obedience and faith
are precious now.
After death,
when everything is laid bare,
they no longer carry
that same praise.

Since the unseen,
the absent,
and the veil
have this hidden excellence,
close your lips.

For us,
silence is better.

Brother,
leave off speaking.
God Himself
will unveil the knowledge
He keeps with Him.

What witness does the sun need
except its own face?
And what witness
is greater than God?

The Need To Speak

Yet another voice replies:

No, I will speak.
For God,
the angels,
and the knowers of sacred truth
all join
in bearing witness.

God, the angels,
and those grounded
in the sciences of the Divine
testify

that there is no god
but Him,
the Ever-Living,
the One who endures.

But once God Himself
has borne witness,
what are the angels,
that they should be named beside
Him?

They are named
because weak eyes
and frail hearts
cannot bear the full radiance
of the Sun.

Like the bat,
which cannot endure sunlight
and turns away in helplessness.

So know this:

The angels too
are helpers,
co-witnesses,
showing forth the Sun in heaven.

They say,
"We borrowed our light
from a Sun.
We have shone upon the weak
like deputies
of a mighty King."

Some are like the new moon,
some like the moon
on its seventh night,
some like the full moon.

Each angel
has a rank
in light
and spiritual worth.

Each one,
according to its station,
receives a share
of that radiance,
with wings of light,
three or four pairs.

And human intellects too
have wings,
though they differ greatly
from one another.

That is why

the angel who accompanies each
person
in good or evil
matches that soul's own degree.

The stars shine
to guide the dim-sighted,
those who cannot even bear
the moon.

Stars For The Wayfarer

Then the Prophet, peace be upon
him,
said to Zayd:

Do not unveil this mystery
more openly than this.
And be careful
to remain within the Sacred Law.

The Prophet said,

"My Companions are like the stars.
For travellers on the Way,
they are lamps.
For devils,
they are meteors."

If every person
had the eye
and the strength
to receive light directly
from the sun of heaven,

there would be no need
for moon or stars
to witness to the sun.

The Moon,
which is the Prophet,
says to earth,
to cloud,
to shadow,

"I am a human being
like you,
but revelation comes to me:
your God is One."

Like you,
my nature was dark.
The Sun of revelation
gave me this light.

Compared with the great spiritual
suns,
I too have a kind of dimness.
Yet for the darkened souls of
humanity,
I am light.

I am made gentler,
less blazing,
so that you may bear me.

You are not yet ready
for the most radiant Sun.

I was mixed,
like honey and vinegar together,
so I could become a remedy
for the sickness of the heart.

But once you are healed,
O one long bound by illness,
leave the vinegar behind,
and keep to the honey.

When the throne of the heart
is restored,
cleansed of sensual desire,
then the All-Merciful
is enthroned there.

After that,
God governs the heart
without intermediary,
for the heart has come near
to that intimacy.

This discourse has no end.

Where is Zayd,
so I may counsel him again:
Do not seek fame.
Do not make a display
of mystery

The Shifting Flame

(Verses 3667-3720)

Summary

Rumi begins with the disappearance of Zayd, not simply as a man who has gone elsewhere, but as one who has vanished into a deeper spiritual state. The passage moves from this image of self-loss into a meditation on resurrection, reminding the listener that God brings beings out of non-existence just as surely as He will raise them again on the Last Day. Human fear, pride, and attachment to worldly rank are shown to come from forgetting this Divine power. Only the love of God and the search for the Water of Life can free the soul from inner torment.

Then the teaching turns toward the dark night of this world, where the seeker must travel awake. The central danger is the fire of lust, the nafs in its

Nimrod-like rebellion. This fire is not quenched by indulgence, but by the light of religion, the Light of God, and the Abrahamic trust by which the fire becomes "coolness and peace." The closing story of the fire in Medina makes the teaching concrete: the outward blaze reflects an inward moral sickness. 'Umar reveals that charity without sincerity cannot extinguish such a fire. True giving must be for God alone, joined to discernment, humility, and companionship with those who live near Him.

Verses of the Poem

Vanishing Of Self

You will not find Zayd now.
He has fled.
He leapt out of the row of shoes,
and left even his shoes behind.

And who are you,
that you think you can find him?
Zayd cannot even find himself.
He has disappeared
like a star
when the sun pours out its light.

You will find no sign of him,
no trace at all.
You will not find a single straw-star
in that straw-strewn road of
heaven.

Our senses,
our small measured speech,
are erased
in the knowledge
and wisdom
of the Divine King.

Within the God-intoxicated ones,
their senses and their
understanding
rise and fall,
wave after wave,
in the sea of
"they shall be gathered before Us."

When night returns,
the burden returns too.
The stars that had gone hidden
go back again
to their work.

God gives the senseless back their
senses.
They return to awareness

rank after rank,
with rings of secret knowing
hanging in their ears.

They come dancing,
their hands lifted in praise,
crying out in triumph,
"O Lord,
You brought us to life."

Those skins and bones
that seemed broken down
have become riders,
raising dust in the air.

At the Resurrection,
both the grateful
and the ungrateful
rush out from non-being
toward being.

Why do you turn your face away,
pretending not to see?
Did you not once turn away like
this
when you were still in non-
existence,
refusing to believe
you would ever be brought forth?

You had planted your foot
deep in non-being,
saying,
"Who could ever pull me out
from where I stand?"

But do you not see
the action of your Lord,
who seized you
and drew you forth,
who led you
through all these changing states
you never imagined,
never even dreamed?

That non-existence itself
is always His servant.
Work, then, O rebel soul.
Solomon still lives.

The demon still labours,
making vast bowls
like watering-troughs.
It does not dare
answer back
or refuse.

Look at yourself,
how you tremble
for fear of passing away.
Know, then,
that non-existence too trembles
always,
lest God call it forth

into existence.

And if you cling
to rank and worldly honour,
that too comes from fear.
That too is inward torment.

Except for love
of the Most Beautiful God,
everything else,
even if it tastes like sugar,
is really anguish
of the soul.

And what is anguish of soul?
It is to move toward death
without taking hold
of the Water of Life.

People keep both eyes
fixed on earth
and on death.
About the Water of Life
they carry a hundred doubts.

Strive
until a hundred doubts
become ninety.
Walk on
through the night of this world.
If you sleep,
the night will pass,
and you will lose it.

Seeking The Hidden Day

In the dark night,
search for that shining Day.
Let the Reason
that burns through darkness
lead the way before you.

In this blackened night
there is much goodness.
The Water of Life
keeps company
with darkness.

How can you lift your head
from sleep,
while you keep planting
so many seeds
of laziness?

Heavy sleep
and unlawful food
have become companions.
The merchant has fallen asleep,
and the night-thief
has gone to work.

Do you not know your enemies?
Those made of fire
are enemies
to those made of earth.

Fire is hostile
to water
and to water's children,
just as water
is hostile
to the life of fire.

Water extinguishes fire
because it is the enemy
of the children of water.

And deeper still,
this fire
is the fire of lust,
the root
of sin
and wandering astray.

Outer fire
can be put out
with water.
But the fire of lust
is dragging a person
toward Hell.

This fire of lust
is not calmed by water,
because it has
the tormenting nature of Hell,
never satisfied,
never at rest.

What heals
the fire of lust?
The light of religion.
This light
is what puts out the fire
of unbelief within.

And what truly kills this fire?
The Light of God.
Let the light of Abraham
be your teacher,

so that this body of yours,
so much like dry wood,
may be delivered
from the fire
of the Nimrod-like self,
the rebellious nafs.

Fiery desire
does not grow less
by feeding it.
It grows less only
when you leave it unfed.

As long as you keep
laying kindling on the flames,
how will the fire go out,
even if a wood-carrier
stands nearby?

But when you stop
bringing fuel,
the fire dies down.
For reverent fear of God
pours water
upon the blaze.

How could that fire
blacken the beautiful face
of a soul
that has been dyed rose-bright
by the Godfearing awe
alive in human hearts?

The Fire In Medina

In the days of Umar,
may God be pleased with him,
a great fire broke out in the city.

It devoured even stones
as if they were dry wood.
It seized buildings and homes,
and at last
it leapt even
toward the wings
and nests of birds.

Half the city
was taken by flame.
Water itself
stood astonished,
afraid before it.

Some wise men
were throwing skins
filled with water and vinegar
upon the fire,

but the blaze only swelled
in stubborn fury,
for help was reaching it
from the One
whose power has no limit.

The people hurried to Umar,
crying,
"This fire
will not go out with water."

He said,
"That fire is one of God's signs.
It is a flame
born from your own wrongdoing.

Leave off water.
Give bread in charity.
Leave off greed,
if you truly belong
among my people."

They answered him,
"We have opened our doors.
We have been generous.
We have given freely."

He said,
"You gave bread
by custom and habit.
You did not open your hands
for God's sake.

You gave for reputation,
for display,
for pride,
not from holy fear,
not from reverence,
not from humble prayer."

Wealth is seed.
Do not scatter it
in every salty field.
Do not place a sword
in the hand
of every highwayman.

Learn to distinguish
the people of religion
from the people of spite.
Seek the one
who sits with God,
and sit with him.

Everyone shows kindness
to his own circle.
The fool,
showing favor to fools,
imagines
he has done
a righteous deed.

The Steel Surrendered

(Verses 3721-3772)

Summary

The story begins with Ali (AS) in the heat of battle. He has every right, outwardly, to strike down the man beneath him. But when the man spits in his face, Ali lets the sword fall. In that instant, the fight is no longer for God alone. Personal anger has entered, and Ali refuses to act from ego. His restraint becomes the real blow, and it pierces the enemy's heart more deeply than any weapon could.

The knight begins to sense that he has witnessed something from beyond the ordinary world. He praises Ali's courage, generosity, and spiritual rank, then asks what vision caused such a sudden turning. From there, the poem opens into a teaching about sacred perception: some see only surfaces, while others behold the

Unseen. Rumi also weaves in images of Moses' cloud, the Prophet's (PBUH) spiritual nourishment, the moon guiding travellers, and the gate to Divine knowledge. At the heart of it all is a Sufi truth: when the self falls away, action becomes pure, mercy becomes strength, and the hidden door to tawhid, the Divine Unity, begins to open.

Verses of the Poem

A Pure Blow

Learn sincerity from Ali.
Know the Lion of God,
cleansed of every trace of deceit.

In battle with an unbelieving
knight,
he overcame him,
brought him down,
and swiftly raised his sword
to finish the fight.

Then the man spat
in the face of Ali,
the pride of prophets and saints.

He spat upon that face
before which even the moon
bows low in worship.

At once,
Ali threw down his sword.
His force relaxed.

He let the man live.

The warrior stood astonished,
struck silent
by such mercy,
given for no outward reason.

He said,
"You had lifted your sharp sword
against me.
Why cast it away?
Why spare me now?

What did you see
better than killing me in battle,
that your pursuit suddenly
stopped?

What did you witness,
that your anger cooled,
and that lightning flashed
and then withdrew?

What did you see,
that even the reflection of it
set fire
to my heart and soul?

What did you see
beyond matter,
beyond place,
beyond the visible world,
that was dearer than life itself?

You gave me life.
In courage,
you are the Lion of God.
In generosity,
who can truly know what you are?

In generosity,
you are like the cloud of Moses
in the wilderness,
from which came food and bread
beyond compare.

Ordinary clouds bring wheat,
and people labour over it,
baking it,
sweetening it,
making it fit to eat.

But Moses' cloud
spread the wings of mercy,
and gave food already prepared,
sweet and effortless.

For the sake of those
who lived from its bounty,
its mercy raised its banner
in the world.

For forty years,
that provision,
that open-handed gift,
never failed
the hopeful children of Israel,
not for a single day.

Until they too,
through their own baseness,
asked instead
for leeks, herbs,
and lettuce.

O community of Ahmad,
O noble ones,
that heavenly nourishment
still continues for you
until the Resurrection.

The Hidden Food

When the Prophet said,
"I pass the night with my Lord,"
and said,
"He gives me food,"
"He gives me drink,"

this was a sign
of spiritual nourishment,
not bodily eating and drinking.

Receive this saying
without twisting it away,
so it may enter you
like honey and milk.

To force an interpretation
is to push aside the gift,
as though the real meaning
were somehow defective.

That judgment comes
from weakness of understanding.
Universal Reason is the kernel.
Our ordinary reason
is only the rind.

Change yourself,
not the Prophetic saying.
Blame your own dim mind,
not the rose garden
whose fragrance you cannot yet
receive.

Then the knight said,
"O Ali,
you who are all seeing,
all awakened intelligence,
tell me a little
of what you saw.

The sword of your forbearance
has torn open my soul.
The water of your knowledge
has washed the dust of my being.

Speak.
I know these are God's mysteries.
It is His way
to slay without a sword.

He works without tools,
without limbs.
He bestows these hidden gifts,
full of profit and grace.

He lets the mind taste
countless wines,
while eye and ear
remain unaware."

The Unseen Opens

"Tell me," he said,
"O falcon of the highest heaven,
hunter of noble prey,
what did you see
from the Maker just now?

Your eye has learned
to behold the Unseen,
while the eyes of those nearby

remain sealed.

One person sees the moon plainly.
Another sees only darkness.
Another sees three moons at once.

All three sit
in the same place.
Their eyes are open.
Their ears are keen.
Yet each receives
a different world.

Is this sorcery of the eye,
or some hidden grace?

On you there is
the outer form of a lion,
but in me there rises
the beauty of Joseph.

Even if there are
eighteen thousand worlds and
more,
not every eye
has access to them.

Reveal the secret,
O Ali,
you who are accepted by God,
you whose coming is good fortune
after misfortune.

Either tell me
what your reason has found,
or I will speak
what has already dawned in me.

It shone into me from you.
How could you hide it?
Without words
you send out rays,
like the moon."

But if the moon itself
were to speak,
it would guide the night-travellers
more swiftly.

They would be safer
from error and heedlessness.
The voice of the moon
would overcome
the cry of the ghoul.

If even in silence
the moon can guide,
then when it speaks
it becomes light upon light.

Since you are
the Gate of the City of Knowledge,
since you are
a beam from the sun of mercy,

open, O Gate,
for the one who seeks the Gate,
so that through you
the husk may reach the kernel.

Open into the Everlasting,
O Gate of Mercy,
O threshold
of the One
to whom nothing is comparable.

The Door Within

Every breath of air,
every mote of dust,
can become a place
for seeing God.

But while it remains unopened,
who can say,
"Here is the door"?

Unless the Watcher opens it,
that thought does not even arise.

But when the door opens,
the seeker falls into wonder,
grows wings,
and begins to fly
on the strength of that vision.

A careless man
finds treasure in a ruin,
and afterward
he searches every ruin
with longing.

Until you find one pearl
from one dervish,
how will you go
seeking pearls
from another?

Opinion may run
on its own feet
for years and years,
yet never go beyond
the split of its own nostrils.

Tell me,
what do you truly see
except your own nose?

And if you lift that nose
in pride,
how will you ever see at all?

Mercy Stays the Hand

(Verses 3773-3843)

Summary

The wounded man who had spat on Ali asks the question that awakens the whole teaching: why did a warrior who had fully overcome his enemy suddenly lower his sword? He is not only asking for an explanation of action, but for the secret of sainthood. His heart begins to move, like an unborn child stirred by the sun, and that image becomes the key to the passage: hidden life is awakened by a higher light long before the senses can understand it.

Ali answers from the station of pure intention. He says he fights only for God, never for ego, rage, or bodily impulse. The moment personal anger entered, he sheathed the sword, because a deed mixed with self can no longer remain wholly for God. What follows is a deep Sufi unveiling of freedom from the lower

self, of acting through Divine love alone, and of becoming a servant whose anger, giving, restraint, and courage all belong to God.

Then the poem turns toward mercy. The enemy is invited inward, not cast away. His apparent sin becomes the opening through which grace enters. Rumi shows that God can transform even rebellion into return, just as thorns may yield roses and hard stone may become a jewel through the Elixir. The whole passage moves from combat to surrender, from pride to freedom, from wrath to the mercy that opens the everlasting door.

Verses of the Poem

The Question Opens

He said,
Speak, O Commander of the Faithful,
so my soul may begin to stir in me
like a child in the womb.

How can the unborn child move
while it is still under the rule of the stars?
It turns away from the stars,
and leans toward the sun.

When the hour comes
for spirit to be breathed into the child,
then the sun becomes its helper.

The child is set in motion by that sun,
for the sun is already preparing
to clothe it in life.

From the other stars
it had received only faint impressions,
until at last
the sun poured down its light.

By what road was it joined, in the womb,
to that beautiful sun?

By a hidden road,
far beyond the reach of the senses.

The sun in heaven has many paths.
One path feeds gold.
One path turns common stone
into jacinth.

One path reddens the ruby.
One path gives the horseshoe
its flash of fire.

One path ripens fruit.
One path pours courage
into the trembling heart.

So tell me,
O bright-winged falcon
who has learned the ways of the King
and rested on His arm.

Speak,
O royal falcon
who hunts the Anqa,
who overcomes an army
without needing an army.

You alone are a whole community.
You are one,
and you are a hundred thousand.

Speak,
for your servant
has fallen into the grasp of your falcon.

Why was there mercy
where vengeance was expected?
Who reaches out a hand
to a dragon?

The Sword Of God

Ali (AS) said,

I draw the sword
for the sake of God.

I am God's servant.
I do not take orders
from the body.

I am the Lion of God,
not the lion of appetite and rage.
What I do
bears witness to my faith.

In battle,
the truth of the verse appears:
You did not throw, when you threw.
I am only the sword.
The One who wields it
is the Divine Sun.

I have cleared away
the baggage of self.
I have counted all that is other than God
as nothing.

I am a shadow.
The Sun is my master.
I am a doorkeeper,
not a veil before Him.

Like a jewel-filled blade,
I am full of the pearls of union.
In battle
I make men truly live,
not merely die.

Blood does not dim
the brightness of my sword.
How could passing wind
scatter my clouds?

I am not straw.
I am a mountain
of patience,
forbearance,
and justice.

How could a violent wind
carry off a mountain?

What the wind uproots
is refuse,
for contrary winds
blow from every side.

The winds of anger,
lust,
and greed
sweep away the one
who has not bowed in prayer.

I am a mountain,
and my being
is built by Him.

And if ever I become like straw,
then the wind moving me
is His wind.

Nothing stirs my longing
except His breath.
My captain
is only love for the One.

Anger rules over kings,
but to me
it is a servant.
Even anger
I have bound beneath the bridle.

Sheathing The Blade

The sword of my forbearance
has cut down my anger.
What came upon me
was the anger of God,
yet even that
arrived as mercy.

I am drowned in light,

though my roof lies broken.

I am a garden,
though I am called Bu Turab,
Father of Dust.

And when something other than
God
entered my heart,
it became necessary
to sheathe the sword.

So that my name may truly be:
he loves for God's sake.

So that my desire may truly be:
he hates for God's sake.

So that my generosity may truly be:
he gives for God's sake.

So that my restraint may truly be:
he withholds for God's sake.

My withholding is for God.
My giving is for God alone.

I belong wholly to God.
I belong
to no one else.

What I do for God
is not imitation.
It is not whim,
nor opinion.

It is inward seeing,
direct knowing.

I have been released
from strain and restless searching.
I have fastened my sleeve
to the hem of God.

If I fly,
I see the place
toward which I rise.

If I turn in circles,
I see the axis
around which I turn.

If I carry a burden,
I know where I am going.

I am the moon,
and the Sun before me
is my guide.

Beyond The Self

There is no way
to say more than this
to ordinary minds.
The river has no room

for the full Sea.

I speak softly,
according to the measure
of understanding.
This is no defect.
It is the way of the Prophet.

I am free
from self-seeking.

Hear the witness
of one who is free,
for the testimony of slaves
has little worth.

In the law,
the witness of a slave
is not accepted
in judgment.

Even if a thousand slaves
speak on your behalf,
their witness is not received.

And in the sight of God,
the slave of desire
is lower still
than the outward slave.

The outward slave
can be set free
by one word from his master.

But the slave of desire
lives in sweetness,
and dies in bitterness.

There is no release for him
except through God's grace
and special favour.

He has fallen
into a pit with no bottom.
That pit is his own sin.
It is not compulsion.
It is not injustice.

He threw himself there.
And I can find no rope
long enough
to reach its end.

I will stop here.

If this speech goes further,
not only hearts
but stones
will begin to bleed.

If hearts have not bled yet,
it is not because they are hard.
It is because they are distracted,
bewildered,

ill-fated,
and busy with lesser things.

One day they will bleed,
but then
that blood will be of no use.

So bleed now,
while your blood
is still accepted.

Freedom And Mercy

Since the witness of slaves
is not received,
the true witness
is the one
who is not enslaved
by the ghoul of sensual desire.

We sent thee as a witness
was revealed in the Quran
because the Prophet
was wholly free
from creaturely selfhood.

Since I am free,
how could anger bind me?

Nothing remains here
but Divine qualities.

Come in.

Come in.

The grace of God
has made you free.

His mercy
has gone before His wrath.

Come now.
You have escaped the danger.

You were an ordinary stone.
The Elixir
has made you a jewel.

You have been delivered
from unbelief
and its thorny wilderness.

Now bloom like a rose
in the cypress-garden of Hu,
the Divine "He."

You are I,
and I am you,
O noble one.

You had become Ali.
How could I kill Ali?

The Sin Turned Rose

You committed a sin

better than many acts of devotion.
In a single instant,
you crossed the heavens.

Blessed was that sin.
Do not rose petals
rise from thorns?

Was not Umar's sin,
his very attempt
against the Prophet,
a road that brought him
to acceptance?

Were not Pharaoh's magicians
first drawn near
through magic and denial?
And did not good fortune
then come to their aid?

If they had not practiced magic,
if they had not denied Moses,
how would they have been brought
before rebellious Pharaoh?

And how then
would they have seen the staff
and the miracles?

Disobedience became obedience,
O people sunk in disobedience.

God has struck off
the head of despair,
for sin and rebellion
may yet be turned
into obedience.

Since He transforms evil deeds
into good,
He can make even sin
an act of returning,
despite the slander of devils.

By this mercy,
the accursed Satan
is driven back,
split open
with envy.

He nurtures a sin in us,
hoping through that sin
to cast us into a pit.

But when he sees
that the sin has become
an act of obedience,
then his dark hour arrives.

The Open Door

Come in.
I open the door to you.

You spat at me,

and I place a gift in your hand.

If this is what I give
to one who has done wrong,
look how low
I lay my head
before even his left foot.

Then what do I give
to the one who does right?

Know this:
treasures,
and kingdoms
that do not pass away

Pardon Past the Edge

(Verses 3845–3871)

Summary

In these verses, the speaker is Ali (AS), whose words reveal the deep Sufi vision of surrender to God. He speaks to the one destined to kill him, yet he holds no bitterness. His mercy remains sweet even in the face of murder, because he sees beyond the visible hand to the Divine decree moving through all things. This is not passivity, but a luminous trust in God's will, where even pain is gathered into unity.

The passage then broadens from personal destiny to a broader teaching. Ali explains that God's justice and mercy are not opposites in conflict, but two faces of the same Divine wisdom. Just as night gives rest, pruning gives growth, and a physician's cutting brings healing, what seems harsh in outward form may hide

inward mercy. The images of abrogated verses, war giving rise to peace, the black heart holding love's light, and martyrdom containing life all point toward a central truth of tawhid: the One God is acting through every apparent contradiction, leading creation from form toward deeper meaning, from loss toward eternal.

Verses of the Poem

The Friend Foretold

I am made in such a way
that the honey of my kindness
does not turn to poison in anger,
not even toward the one who will
kill me.

The Prophet once whispered
into my servant's ear,
that one day
this head of mine
would be cut from my neck.

By Divine unveiling,
he told my companion
that in the end,
my death would come
through his hand.

So my companion says,
"Kill me first,
before that hateful act
comes from me."

And I say,
"If my death is written through
you,
how can I run
from God's decree?"

He falls before me
and pleads,

"O generous one,
for the sake of God,
cut me in two,

so this dark ending
will not come upon me,
and my soul will not burn in grief
for the one who is its very life."

I say,

"Go on.
The Pen has dried.
What has been written
is already written.

By that Pen,
many high signs
have been brought down.

And there is no hatred in my soul
toward you,
because I do not see this act
as coming from you alone.

You are God's instrument.
The true hand at work
is the hand of God.

How could I fight
the instrument
of the Real?"

Then the knight said,
"If that is so,
why is retaliation allowed?"

And Ali replied,

"That too is from God.
It is a hidden mystery."

Hidden Justice

If He is angered
at His own act,
still from that anger
He makes gardens grow.

It befits Him
to answer His own act,
because in vengeance and mercy
He is One.

In this world of appearances
He is the Prince.
In every realm
He is the Ruler.

If He breaks
His own instrument,
He also repairs
what has been broken.

Understand the sign
within the Revelation:

Whenever We cancel a verse,
or cause it to be forgotten,
We bring one better than it,
or one like it.

Every sacred law
He sets aside,
He removes like grass,
and brings roses instead.

Night cancels
the work of day.
See how stillness itself
can brighten the mind.

Then day returns
and cancels night,
and that stillness
is consumed
by the fire-bearing light.

Though sleep and rest
seem dark,
is not the Water of Life
hidden in darkness?

Did not minds grow fresh there?
Did not a pause in recitation
make the voice more beautiful?

For opposites
are revealed by opposites.

In the black depth of the heart,
God placed
the everlasting light of love.

Mercy Inside Severity

The Prophet's wars
became the turning point of peace.

The peace of later days
was born
from those very battles.

That ravisher of hearts
cut down
hundreds of thousands of heads,

so that the heads
of the people of the world
might rest in safety.

The gardener cuts away
the harmful branch,
so the date-palm
may grow taller
and bear sweeter fruit.

The skilled gardener
pulls weeds from the garden,
so the orchard
may flourish
and the fruit shines.

The physician removes
the rotten tooth,
so the beloved patient
may be saved
from pain and disease.

Many benefits
are hidden inside what seems a
defect.

For martyrs,
there is life
inside death.

The Radiant Passage

(Verses 3872–3892)

Summary

Rumi speaks of martyrdom, sacrifice, and the mystery of what is born when something is cut away for God. He begins with the image of a severed throat: first the slaughtered animal, whose death becomes nourishment for human life, then the martyred human being, whose cutthroat gives rise to something still higher — a "third throat" sustained not by bread, but by God's own light and heavenly drink. This is the soul awakened beyond ordinary survival.

From there, the teaching turns inward. The real struggle is with the lower self, still attached to bread, comfort, and worldly dignity. God's breaking is not cruelty but restoration. He tears only as the One who can sew, ruins only as the One who can rebuild. The passage closes in surrender before Divine decree: do

not boast, do not condemn others too quickly, but recognize how little power the ego truly has before the vast mystery of God's will, justice, and transforming mercy.

Verses of the Poem

The Cutthroat

When the martyr's throat is cut,
the throat that once swallowed
daily bread,

the hidden grace within that
wound
receives the Divine bounty,

and what comes from God
becomes sweet beyond telling.

When an animal is lawfully slain,
another life is raised from it.

From that severed throat,
the throat of man is nourished,

and its worth increases.

So when a human throat is cut
in martyrdom,
come, reflect on what is born from
that.
Read this mystery
through the likeness of that one.

A third throat comes to life,
and God Himself tends it,

with His sherbet,
with His lights.

The cutthroat drinks that heavenly
drink,
but only the throat

that has been freed from "No,"
and has died into "Yes."

Bread And Alchemy

Enough now,
O timid one, weak in spirit.

How long will your soul
live on bread alone?

Like the willow,
you bear no fruit,

because for the sake of white bread
you traded away your honour.

If the lower self
cannot let go of this bread,

then take the elixir,
and turn your copper into gold.

If you want your garment washed clean,
do not turn away

from the quarter of the bleachers,
where cloth is cleansed.

Yes, bread may have broken your fast,
but cling to the One

who binds what has been broken,
and rise.

Since His hand
mends what is broken,

then know this too:
His breaking is itself a healing.

If you break a thing,
He will say, "Come, mend it."

But you have no hand for that,
no foot for that.

You are helpless.

So the right to break
belongs to Him alone,

because He alone
can restore what has been shattered.

Ruin And Repair

The One who knows how to sew
also knows how to tear.

Whatever He sells away,
He buys back better.

He overturns a house,
leaves it in ruins,

then in a moment
makes it more habitable than before.

If He cuts one head from the body,
at once He raises up

hundreds of thousands of heads
for the one who lost it.

Had He not ordained retaliation
for the guilty,

had He not said,
"In retaliation, there is life for
you,"

who would dare
draw a sword

against one already bound
within the decree of God?

For anyone
whose eyes have truly been opened

knows that the one who kills
was himself compelled

by Divine destiny.

Whoever has felt that decree
rest upon his neck like a collar

would strike even
at the head of his own child.

So go,
be in awe of God.

Do not spend your breath
cursing the wicked.

Know your own helplessness
before the snare

of the Divine decree.

The Humbling of the Ego

(Verses 3893–3923)

Summary

Adam is the one being corrected, and through him, all of us are being taught. He looks at Iblis with contempt, thinking the fallen one is simply beneath him. But the Divine voice interrupts that judgment and reveals a terrifying mystery: no creature can safely boast before God, because hidden destinies belong to Him alone. In an instant, appearances can be overturned. One who seems secure may fall, and one who seems lost may be brought near.

From that shock, the passage turns into prayer. The speaker pleads not to be abandoned after receiving guidance, because the human being is fragile, easily plundered by ego, the body, possessions, and self-regard. The deepest suffering is not pain, but separation from the Beloved. Rumi then moves into tawhid, the

truth that all power belongs to Allah alone: He wounds and heals, withers and restores, humbles and revives. The soul's safety lies only in Divine nearness, mercy, and guidance. Everything other than Allah passes away, but His grace keeps pouring like rain from a living cloud.

Verses of the Poem

A Hidden Turning

One day, Adam looked down
with contempt and scorn
on Iblis, the outcast, the damned.

A trace of self-regard rose in him.
He became pleased with himself,
and laughed
at Iblis in his ruin.

Then the jealousy of God cried
out,

"O chosen one,
you do not know
the hidden mysteries
of My decree.

If He were to turn
the inward fur outward,
He could uproot
even a mountain of faith.

In a single instant,
He could tear the veil
from a hundred Adams,
and bring forth
a hundred devils
newly surrendered to Islam."

Adam said,

"I repent
of that glance.

I will not again
look with such disrespect."

O Help of those who cry for help,
guide us rightly.

There is no ground
for pride
in knowledge,
or in wealth.

The Prayer Beneath Fear

Do not let the heart wander
after You have guided it
by Your grace.

Turn away from us
the harm
the Pen has written.

Let the hardship
of Your decree
pass lightly over our souls.

Do not cut us off
from those
who are well-pleasing to You.

Nothing is more bitter
than separation from You.

Without Your guarding,
there is nothing
but bewilderment.

Our worldly possessions
ambush
our inward treasure.

Our bodies
snatch the robe of spirit
from our souls.

When the hand of our own making
devours
what the foot was walking toward,
how can anyone be saved
without Your protection?

And even if a person,
by himself alone,
escaped these terrible dangers,
he would only have saved
a storehouse
of fear and misfortune.

For the soul,
when it is not joined
to the Beloved,
remains forever
blind
and darkened
within itself.

If You do not admit it
to Your presence,
then even if it survives,
count that soul as dead,
for what life is there
without You?

Before Divine Majesty

If You rebuke Your servants,
that belongs to You,
O One

whose every will is fulfilled.

If You call
the sun and moon
mere froth,

if You say
the straight cypress
is bent double,

if You call
the highest heaven
and the sky
worthless,

if You name
the mine and the sea
poor and empty,

that is fitting
before Your perfection.

The power
to complete
what is incomplete,
belongs to You alone.

You are beyond danger.
Beyond nonexistence.
You are the One
who brings the nonexistent
into being,
and grants it life.

The One who makes a thing grow
can also burn it away.

The One who tears
can also mend.

Every autumn
He withers the garden,
then once more
He brings up the rose,
dyeing the earth with color,

saying,

"You who had withered,
come forth again.
Be fresh again.
Be beautiful again.
Be praised again."

He gave sight back
to the blinded narcissus.

He cut the reed,
then nurtured it again,
and gave it voice.

Since we are made,
and not makers,
our place is only

humility
and contentment.

We are all flesh,
busy with the needs of flesh.

If You do not call us
toward Yourself,
we are all Ahrimans,
all devils in the dark.

And if we have been freed
from Ahriman,
it is only because
You redeemed our souls
from blindness.

Nothing But Allah

You are the Guide
of every living being.

What is the blind one
without a staff,
without a guide?

Everything sweet
or bitter,
if it is apart from You,
destroys the human being.
It is fire
in its essence.

Whoever takes fire
as refuge and support
becomes a Magian,
a worshipper of flame.

Everything besides Allah
passes away,
is vain.

But the grace of Allah
is a cloud
pouring down
abundantly,
unceasingly.

Nectar on the Steel

(Verses 3924–3973)

Summary

Ali speaks from a place beyond ordinary fear, addressing both his would-be killer and all who still cling to the body as if it were the self. For him, death is no longer punishment or loss. It has become a homecoming because the lover of God sees dying not as extinction but as return, resurrection, and nearness to the One. The one who truly knows tawhid, Divine Unity, no longer trembles before the cutting away of form.

From Ali, the teaching widens toward the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whose outward struggle for Mecca is revealed as obedience to God, never a desire for worldly rule. Rumi then turns inward, warning that the ego sees only dust, as Iblis saw only Adam's clay and missed the Divine secret. The true saint is the Lion

of God, one who has passed beyond form and seeks freedom through self-annihilation. The final movement brings the Quranic challenge to the Jews: if one is sincere, death is not terror but treasure, because it is the crossing back into the presence of the Beloved.

Verses of the Poem

The Nearness Of Return

He said,
Day and night,
I see the one who will kill me,
before my eyes.

Yet no anger rises in me.
Death has become sweet to me,
sweet as heavenly manna,
because in my dying,
resurrection has already taken hold
of me.

For us,
the death that opens into
deathlessness
is lawful.
The provision that comes
without worldly provision
is pure gift.

Outwardly, it is death.
Inwardly, it is life.
It seems like severance,
but in secret
it is abiding forever.

To the child in the womb,
birth looks like a leaving,
a loss,
a falling away.
But once it enters the world,
it blooms anew.

Since I am filled
with longing for death,
the warning,
do not cast yourselves into
destruction,
is not meant in the same way for
me.

Only what is sweet
needs to be forbidden.
Who needs to forbid
what is already bitter?

The sour fruit
carries its own refusal
in its taste,
its seed,
its skin.

But for me,
the fruit of dying
has become sweet.
This is why the word came,
No, they are living.

So kill me,
my faithful friends,
kill me,
lowly as I am.
For in being slain,
my life becomes everlasting.

Yes, in my death
is my true life,
O young man.
How long must I remain
away from home?
How long?

If staying here
were not separation from God,
He would not have said,
Surely, to Him we return.

The one who truly returns
is the one who goes back
to his own city,
escaping the whirl of Time,
drawing near
to Unity.

The Plea For Release

Then his stirrup-holder came and said,
For God's sake,
kill me.
Deliver me
from this terrible fate.

He returned again, saying,
O Ali,
strike quickly,
before I reach
that bitter hour.
Pour out my blood.
I make it lawful for you,
so my eyes may not behold
that rising of the Last Day.

Ali said,
Even if every atom
became a murderer,
and every hand
lifted a dagger against you,
not one of them
could cut even a single hair from you,

unless the Pen
had written it so.

Do not grieve.
I will stand for you.
I am an intercessor.
I belong to the spirit,
not to the body.

This body
has no great value in my sight.
Without the body,
I remain noble,
son of the noble.

Dagger and sword
have become sweet basil to me.
My death
has become my feast,
my garden of narcissus.

Rule Without Hunger

One who has so disciplined the body,
how could he crave kingship
or the Caliphate
for himself?

If outwardly he moves
toward authority,
it is only to show rulers
the way of right judgment,
to breathe another spirit
into sovereignty,
to make the palm tree
of the Caliphate
bear fruit.

The Prophet's Aim

So too,
when the Prophet sought
the opening of Mecca
and lands beyond it,
how could anyone imagine
that worldly dominion
was his desire?

He had called this world
a carcass.
How could he hunger
for what he himself had cast down?
He moved only
by the command of God.

On the day of trial,
he turned his eyes and heart away
even from the treasuries
of the seven heavens.

When all the horizons
of the heavens
were filled with houris and unseen beings,
adorned for his sake,

he still desired
nothing but the Beloved.

He was so immersed
in the greatness of God
that even the nearest ones
could find no entrance there.

In that station,
there was no room
for prophet,
angel,
or spirit.
Understand this well.

He was of those
whose gaze did not wander.
He was not like the crow
seeking carrion.
He was drunk
with the Dyer,
with the One
who gives all colours,
not with the garden
of passing colours.

The Colored Glass

If the treasures
of celestial realms
looked to the Prophet
like a straw,
then what were Mecca,
Syria,
or Iraq to him,
that he should fight for them
out of worldly longing?

That suspicion belongs
to the hypocrite,
who judges the Prophet
by the measure
of his own crooked soul.

If you place yellow glass
before your eyes,
all sunlight appears yellow.

Break the blue glass.
Break the yellow glass.
Then you will know
the dust from the rider,
the veil from the one veiled.

Dust And Fire

The dust of the body
rose around the spiritual rider,
and you mistook the dust
for the man of God.

Iblis saw only the clay
and said,
How could this one of earth
be greater than I,
who am of fire?

So long as you look
at prophets and saints
as merely human,
know that this sight
is an inheritance from Iblis.

If you are not
a child of Iblis,
then why has the legacy
of that cur
come to you?

I am not a cur.
I am the Lion of God,
a servant of God.
The Lion of God
is the one who has passed beyond
form.

The lion of this world
hunts prey
and looks for provision.
The Lion of the Lord
seeks freedom
and death.

For in death
he sees a hundred lives.
Like the moth,
he burns away
his borrowed self.

The Test Of Sincerity

Longing for death
became the mark of the sincere.
This was made a test
for the Jews.

God said, in meaning,
O Jews,
if you are true,
death is treasure,
death is gain.

Just as worldly people
desire profit,
the sincere desire death
even more than that,
for through it
they meet the Real.

So let this longing
appear upon your tongues,
if you seek honour
among the truthful.

But when Muhammad
raised this banner,
not one of them
had the courage
to answer the call.

He said,
If they truly spoke those words,

not one of them
would remain alive in the world.

Then they came instead
with tribute and land-tax,
saying,
Do not disgrace us,
O Lamp of the world.

This discourse has no end.
Give me your hand now,
for your eye
has caught sight
of the Friend.

Glossary of Arabic, Persian, and Key Conceptual Terms

This glossary provides brief explanations of Arabic and Persian terms, along with key conceptual words, that appear throughout this modern poetic rendering of the Masnavi. While not all terms are found verbatim in the original text, they are used here to convey the deeper symbolic, spiritual, or cultural meanings essential to understanding the poems and their interpretations.

Abbas - The uncle of the Prophet (PBUH), whose line became the support of the Caliphate.
Abdal - A group of high-ranking "substitute" saints who serve as hidden pillars in the spiritual governance of the world.
Abjad - The first word in the traditional mnemonic for the Arabic alphabet, representing basic learning.
Abraham - A symbol of the surrendered soul and the "Friend of God" who remains cool and unharmed in the fire of worldly trials.
Abu Bakr - The first Caliph and the most intimate companion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), known for his spiritual insight.
Abu Jahl - Meaning "Father of Ignorance," a nickname for a prominent adversary of the Prophet (PBUH) who remained spiritually blind.
Ad - An ancient tribe mentioned in the Quran, destroyed by a violent wind after rejecting their prophet.
Adab - The practice of refined spiritual etiquette, humility, and proper conduct in one's relationship with others and the Divine.
Adam - The archetypal human being and vicegerent of God, representing

the mirror in which the Divine names and attributes are reflected.

Ahmad - A celestial and spiritual name for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), signifying his praiseworthy nature.

Ahrimans - Zoroastrian and Persian term for personified evil or demonic forces.

Ajal - The divinely predestined or appointed term fixed for the existence of every created thing.

Al-Ghayb - The Unseen world or the hidden realm of spiritual realities known only to God.

Allah - The unique Arabic Name for the one true God, the Creator and Sustainer of all existence.

Almighty - A reference to God's absolute power and majesty; closer to al-Qadir, "the All-Powerful," than specifically al-Aziz.

Amir - A commander, prince, or ruler; in the Masnavi, it may refer either to worldly authority or, symbolically, to commanding spiritual power.

Amirs - High-ranking military commanders or leaders within a historical Islamic political and social context.

Anqa - A mythical, unreachable bird symbolizing the Divine Presence or the highest spiritual station.

Alayhis Salam (AS / A.S.) – Literally, "peace be upon him." A traditional Islamic honorific used after the names of prophets and, in some traditions, angels or other revered holy figures.

Baghdad - The great Abbasid capital and a major center of Islamic learning, culture, and Sufi life; in poetry, it may suggest spiritual refinement, worldly splendour, or the seat of authority.

Balam, son of Baur - A figure gifted with spiritual rank who fell into ruin after opposing the Prophet Moses through pride.

Bayazid - Refers to Bayazid Bastami, a renowned 9th-century Persian Sufi mystic known for his ecstatic utterances.

Beys - A traditional title for a chieftain, governor, or nobleman in the Turkish and Persian cultural spheres.

Bu Turab - Father of Dust, a humble title for Ali (AS), signifying his spiritual fertility and groundedness.

Buraq - The celestial, winged steed that carried the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during the Night Journey (Isra and Miraj).

Caliph - A deputy or representative of God or the Prophet on earth, often used to describe a spiritual or political leader.

Dal - The name of the Arabic letter 'D', symbolizing the articulation of the Divine Word through breath.

Dervish - A seeker or mystic living in spiritual poverty and total reliance on God.

Dervishes - Spiritual mendicants on the Sufi path who have embraced inner poverty and detachment from worldly wealth.

Duldul - The name of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mule, often used in Sufi poetry to symbolize a faithful and steady spiritual mount.

Eight Paradises - The various levels or celestial gardens of eternal reward described in Islamic eschatology.

Elixir - A metaphorical substance in Sufi alchemy that transforms the "base metal" of the ego into the "gold" of the soul.

Euphrates - A great river symbolizing the sweet and abundant waters of Divine knowledge.

Eve - The partner of Adam, representing the soul's expansion and the beginning of the human journey through the material world.

Fana - The mystical state of self-annihilation or the dissolving of the individual ego in the Divine Presence.

Faqr - Spiritual poverty, representing the soul's total dependence on God and detachment from worldly possessions.

Faruq - An honorific title meaning "the one who distinguishes truth from falsehood," specifically referring to the second Caliph, Umar.

Fiqh of Fiqh - The "deep law within law" which refers to the spiritual essence underlying outward religious jurisprudence.

Fourth Heaven - The traditional spiritual realm associated with the sun and the Prophet Jesus (AS).

Gabriel - The Archangel of Revelation who symbolizes the Universal Intellect and the intermediary between the Absolute and the human heart.

Ghoul - A desert-dwelling demon representing the cries of distraction or spiritual error that the light of the moon overcomes.

Gnosis - Another term for Marifah, referring to the intuitive, direct knowledge of spiritual mysteries.

God the Exalted - The Supreme Reality (Allah al-Ali), who transcends all formal descriptions while remaining the sustainer of every atom.

Ha - The name of the Arabic letter 'H', representing the diversity of forms created from a single spiritual source.

Hamza - The uncle of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), celebrated as the "Lion of God" for his immense courage in battle.

Harut - One of the two angels sent to Babylon who fell from their heavenly station due to self-confidence and judgment of others.

Hashim - The noble Meccan clan of the Quraysh tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) belonged.

Hawwaz - The second word in the traditional Arabic alphabet mnemonic, signifying outward study.
Houris - Pure, celestial beings of Paradise symbolizing Divine beauty and the rewards of the spiritual life.
Hu - The Arabic pronoun for "He," used in Sufi practice to refer to the Absolute Essence of God.
Humayra - A term of endearment meaning "the little reddish one," used by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for his wife Aisha.
Iblis - The primary devil in Islamic tradition who fell from grace due to his pride and arrogance.
Imam - A leader or model of faith, often referring to the person who leads prayer or serves as a spiritual guide for others.
Iraq - A specific musical mode or maqam in the classical Persian and Arabic tradition.
Islam - The state of total submission and surrender to the will and command of the One God.
Jathimin - A Quranic term describing those who have fallen prostrate and lifeless following divine judgment.
Jayhun - The Oxus River, used as a metaphor for a massive flow of spiritual reality.
Jesus - The breath of divine mercy and the "Spirit from God" (Ruhullah) who possesses the power to revive dead hearts.
Jim - The name of the Arabic letter 'J', used here to illustrate how spirit manifests through the forms of language.
Job - The quintessential model of "sabr" (patience), illustrating the soul's absolute trust in God despite extreme suffering.
Joseph - A prophet symbolizing supreme beauty and the "Water of Life" found in spiritual trials.
Kaba - The cube-shaped building in Mecca that serves as the holiest site in Islam and the metaphorical center of the spiritual world.
Kawthar - The celestial fountain of abundance in Paradise.
Khalifa - A vicegerent or spiritual representative of the Creator on earth.
King - A metaphor for the Divine or the Perfect Man (al-Insan al-Kamil) who exercises true authority over the kingdom of the spirit.
Kirman - A city in Persia famous for its cumin, used here to symbolize bringing something to a place where it already exists in abundance.
Kun - The primordial Divine creative command "Be" that brings all things from non-existence into being or existence.
Lam Yalid - A Quranic phrase meaning "He begets not," affirming God's absolute uniqueness.
Lord - The Sustainer (Rabb) who guides, nourishes, and brings each

created being toward its ultimate spiritual perfection.

Luqman - A sage known for his wisdom and purity, used here to show how testing reveals inward reality.

Magian - A follower of the Zoroastrian faith, here used to describe one who prioritizes fire over the Creator.

Mahw - The mystical state of self-effacement or the dissolving of the ego before the Divine Sea.

Marifah - Direct, experiential gnosis or the deep, mystical knowing of Divine Reality.

Marut - One of the two angels who, alongside Harut, succumbed to the trial of human nature and pride.

Masnavi or Mathnawi - A traditional Persian poetic form consisting of rhyming couplets, famously associated with Rumi's spiritual masterwork.

Masnavi-Ye Manavi - A transliteration variant of the title for Rumi's masterpiece, meaning "The Spiritual Couplets."

Moses - The prophet who represents the struggle against the ego (Pharaoh) and the longing for the direct vision of the Divine.

Mount Qaf - A legendary mountain in Islamic cosmology that symbolizes the spiritual boundary and the station of separation.

Muhammad (PBUH) - The final prophet of Islam, regarded in Sufism as the supreme pattern of spiritual authority and light. The Beloved of God and the Perfect Man who encompasses all previous revelations and serves as the ultimate light of guidance.

Muslim - One who has submitted their will to God and follows the spiritual and legal path of the Islamic faith.

Mustafa - A title for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) meaning "the Chosen One."

Nafs - The lower self or carnal soul that drives an individual toward worldly desires and satisfies the ego.

Nahw - The study of formal grammar, representing intellectual knowledge that can be a source of ego.

Nimrod - The tyrannical king who opposed Abraham, symbolizing the arrogance and rebellion of the ego.

Noah - A symbol of the spiritual guide who provides a vessel of safety for seekers amidst the drowning floods of worldliness.

PBUH - An abbreviation for "Peace Be Upon Him," a traditional blessing used after mentioning the Prophet Muhammad.

Peri - A supernatural being or spirit, often grouped with demons as forces that must be governed by the heart.

Pharaoh - The archetypal figure representing the rebellious ego and prideful resistance to divine truth.

Pir - A spiritual elder or realized guide who possesses the wisdom to heal the soul's inner wounds.

Prophet - A generic reference to the chain of messengers sent to remind humanity of their primordial covenant with God.

Qibla - The sacred direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, symbolizing the heart's ultimate orientation toward God.

Quran - The holy scripture of Islam; Rumi's Masnavi is sometimes called "the Quran in Persian" because of its deep Quranic spirit and teaching, not because it is equal to the Quran.

Qutb - The spiritual "pole" or axis who serves as the supreme head of the saintly hierarchy in Sufi cosmology.

Rabbi Sallim - A prayerful plea meaning "My Lord, save/protect us".

Real - The Truth (al-Haqq), the only true Existence that remains when the illusions of the phenomenal world pass away.

Rustam - The preeminent hero of Persian epic mythology, symbolizing the height of physical strength and chivalry.

Saint - A "Wali" or friend of God who has attained proximity to the Divine and acts as a channel for spiritual grace (barakah).

Salih - A Quranic prophet sent to the tribe of Thamud; his story is linked with the sacred she-camel and the rejection of divine signs.

Salsabil - A celebrated fountain in Paradise, representing the spiritual nourishment available to the exalted.

Sarsar - A fierce, cold, and destructive wind mentioned in the Quran as an instrument of Divine punishment.

Seth - An early prophet in the Islamic tradition who symbolizes the transmission of sacred wisdom and lineage.

Shatt - An Arabic word meaning riverbank, shore, or great river; in poetic usage it can suggest a broad stream, river, or overflowing current.

Shaykh - A spiritual master or elder who possesses deep knowledge of Divine truths and path-walking.

Siddiq - "The Truthful" or "The Veracious," an honorific especially associated with Abu Bakr (AS) for his unwavering faith and confirmation of the Prophet (PBUH).

Simurgh - A mythical bird symbolizing the Divine Essence or the Ultimate Reality.

Sinai - The mountain where Moses encountered Divine light, symbolizing a heart transformed by spiritual revelation.

Solomon - The prophet-king who represents wisdom, divine authority, and mastery over visible and invisible beings under God's command.

Sufi - A practitioner of Islamic mysticism (Tasawwuf) who seeks inward spiritual realization and union with the Divine, in this life.

Surat Al-Anam - The sixth chapter of the Quran, which contains teachings regarding the signs of God and the appointed term.

Surat Al-Duha - A chapter of the Quran that emphasizes God's care for the orphan and the beggar.

Taqwa - A state of reverent God-consciousness, piety, and the shielding of the soul from spiritual harm.

Tawhid - The fundamental Islamic doctrine of the absolute oneness and uniqueness of God.

Thamud - The ancient tribe that was destroyed after rejecting their prophet and harming the sacred she-camel.

Tigris - A metaphorical representation of the vast and overflowing river of God's infinite knowledge.

Uman - Refers to the Sea of Oman, used as a symbol for the vastness of Divine abundance.

Water of Life - A metaphor for the eternal, divine knowledge that grants spiritual immortality and refreshes the soul.

Ya to Alif - The full span of the alphabet from the last letter to the first, symbolizing the diversity of created beings.

Yaqin - The station of absolute certainty and unwavering faith in Divine Truth.

Zal - A legendary Persian figure and father of the hero Rustam, known for his wisdom and white hair.

Zanjabil - A ginger-flavoured spring in Paradise mentioned in the Quran, symbolizing the pure refreshment of the spirit.

Zayd - A common Arabic personal name often used as a generic example in grammar, theology, and poetry; in Sufi contexts, it may represent the ordinary human soul undergoing transformation.

Resources to Deepen Your Journey

The following online sources and books may offer helpful insights for readers who wish to explore Rumi's Masnavi and its Islamic and Sufi context in greater depth.

Online Gateways to Rumi and the Masnavi

Dar al-Masnavi – dar-al-masnavi.org

A rich website curated by scholar Dr. Ibrahim Gamard, focusing on Rumi's authentic Islamic context. It features the complete Persian Masnavi, multiple translations, articles, and audio recordings.

Masnavi.net

An interactive site offering the full Masnavi with side-by-side Persian and English text. It's an excellent tool for comparing the original and the translation, and it includes verse-by-verse audio.

Ganjoor – Ganjoor.net

A digital library of Persian poetry. For those curious about the original language, it provides the complete Persian texts of Rumi's works.

Masnavi Translations in Print

The Mathnawī (Complete), trans. Reynold A. Nicholson

The classic complete English translation and the foundation for this modern poetic rendering. His translation is famously literal and retains a formal, somewhat "Victorian" tone. While this can feel archaic, its precision is invaluable, and its extensive commentary on the historical and spiritual context is an unparalleled resource for deep study.

The Masnavi (Oxford World's Classics), trans. Jawid Mojaddedi

A highly respected modern verse translation, both scholarly and readable. For most readers today, this is the ideal version for experiencing the Masnavi's poetic flow and spiritual depth in contemporary English.

Tales from the Masnavi, by A. J. Arberry

A perfect introduction for newcomers. Arberry presents Rumi's key stories in clear, engaging prose, setting aside the complex poetic digressions to make the spiritual lessons highly accessible.

Understanding Rumi and His World

The Triumphal Sun, by Annemarie Schimmel

A masterful study of Rumi's life, thought, and poetry by a world-renowned scholar. Schimmel connects Rumi's work to his deep Islamic faith and his transformative relationship with his teacher, Shams of Tabriz.

The Sufi Path of Love, by William C. Chittick

Perhaps the most accessible guide to Rumi's spiritual teachings. Chittick organizes Rumi's core ideas—on God, love, the soul, and the spiritual journey—by theme, letting Rumi speak in his own words. It is perfect for understanding the "why" behind the poetry.

The Garden of Truth, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

A profound and clear introduction to Sufism, the mystical heart of Islam. This book provides the spiritual and philosophical context of Rumi's world, helping the reader understand the tradition he so beautifully expressed.

Rumi: Past and Present, East and West, by Franklin D. Lewis

The definitive biography of Rumi, covering his life, teachings, and legacy. Crucially, this work serves as an essential corrective, showing how Rumi's profound Islamic identity was often diluted in popular Western versions. It remains one of the most comprehensive single-volume studies of Rumi available in English.

Rumi's Masnavi - A Journey Back to the Divine

Over 700 years ago, the Sufi mystic Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi began dictating a spiritual masterpiece that still speaks to seekers around the world. The Masnavi, composed in Persian and overflowing with parables, stories, and mystical teachings, is a timeless guide for the soul.

This new poetic rendering, based on Reynold A. Nicholson's landmark English translation, brings Rumi's luminous insights into contemplative, modern English. With rhythm and simplicity, the verses are arranged in short lines to help you slow down and reflect, just as they were meant to be received.

Throughout the journey, signposts and subheadings offer gentle guidance, allowing space to pause, listen, and let the deeper meanings unfold. Whether you are new to Rumi or returning to him with fresh eyes, this book invites you into a living conversation that transcends time and doctrine.

This second part of Volume I carries the reader deeper into Rumi's opening journey, where the first great movement of the Masnavi unfolds through stories of poverty, surrender, longing, and hidden mercy. Here, the seeker is invited beyond surface judgment into the polished mirror of the heart, where even brokenness becomes a doorway back to God.

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